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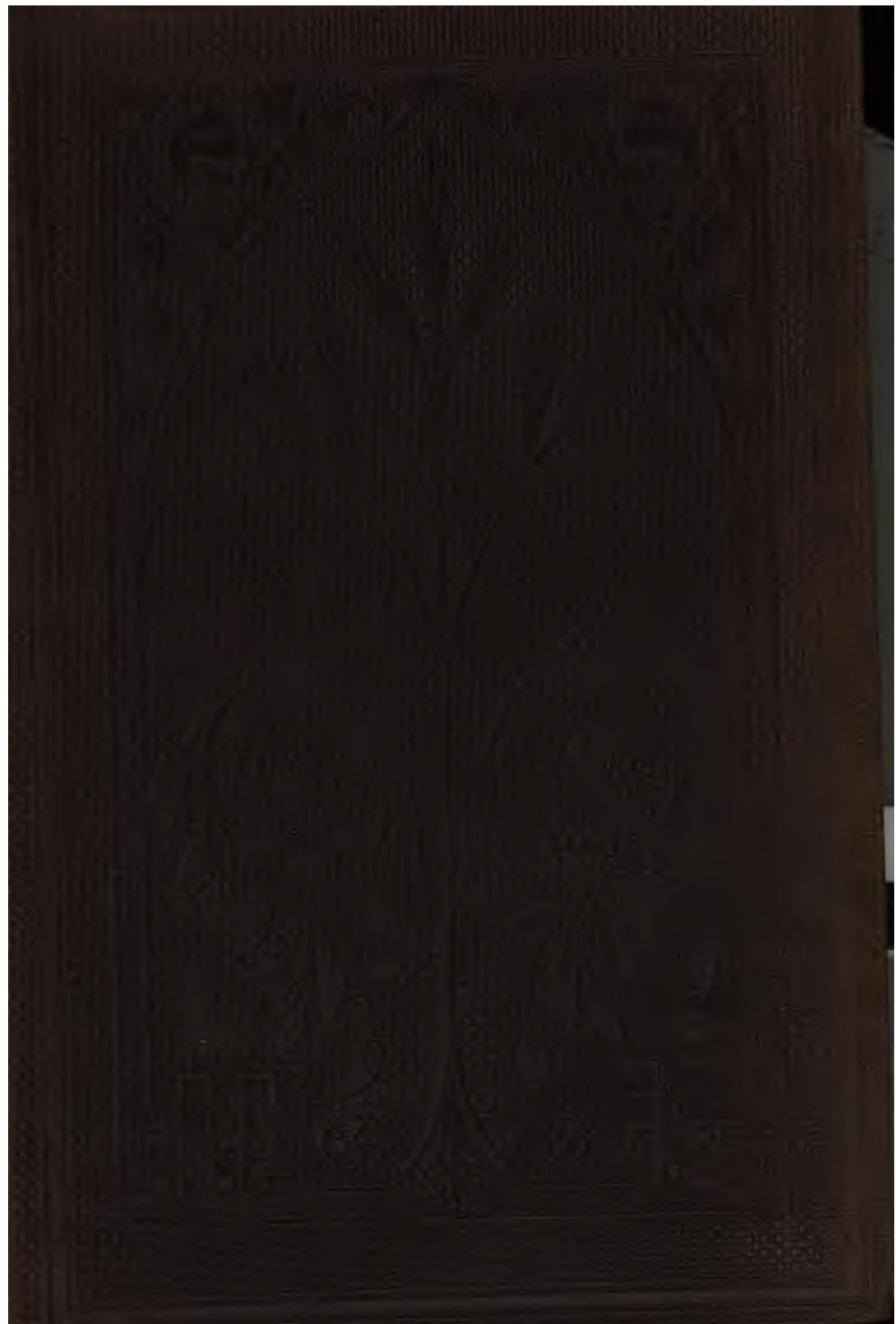
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THE ROSE AND THE LOTUS;

OR,

HOME IN ENGLAND,

AND

HOME IN INDIA.

LONDON :
B. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.

THE ROSE AND THE LOTUS;

OR,

HOME IN ENGLAND,

AND

HOME IN INDIA.

BY THE WIFE OF A BENGAL CIVILIAN.

LONDON:

BELL AND DALDY, 186, FLEET STREET.

1859.

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P R E F A C E.

SOME years ago (before that terrible mutiny broke out, which has so desolated our happy Indian homes), I began a tale, which was written for the amusement of a circle of friends at a small station. This long lay by unfinished, for I could find no heart to write of Home in India, while every mail brought fresh tidings of horror and bloodshed. Still, unwilling to abandon my project altogether, I commenced Home in England, with the view to introducing my heroine to the reader, and contrasting the one life with the other. Now, that it has pleased God to restore in great measure

the peace and tranquillity which has been so long disturbed, I have addressed myself to my former work, and hope that both my Home sketches may interest and please my readers. The tale is fictitious, although many of the incidents in Home in India are facts. Most of the characters also are taken from real life, though I have thought it right to disguise them under imaginary names.

ERRATA.

Page 44, line 19—for *of*, read *in*.
„ 122, „ 23—for *meet*, read *need*.
„ 126, „ 16—for *striving*, read *stirring*.
„ 362, „ 22—for *impassionately*, read *dispassionately*.
„ 365, „ 6—for *haziru*, read *hazaree*.

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HOME IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS what people call an Indian child; that is, born in India of English parents. I was brought home early, and early deprived of a mother's love. My father had returned to the scene of his labours, and I was left, half orphaned, to the charge of a kind uncle and aunt. I was too young to realize my position, and, with the hopefulness of childhood, I looked forward (without a shadow of a doubt as to its ultimate realization) to a meeting with papa, when I should be considered old enough to return to India. Sometimes, as I lay in my little bed at night, and thought about that happy time to come, I wondered whether it could really be possible to be so perfectly happy as I should be then; and strange, dim, pictures used to arise in my mind, of my infant life in the far off land. Visions of large gloomy rooms and quaint

monotonous songs to hush me to sleep, the boat going down the river, and the hotel in Calcutta; and then the games on board ship, and the stir there was amongst the crew when we came in sight of England. These broken memories were all that remained to me. My father constantly wrote tender letters, and so kept up the love I treasured in my heart for him. Until I was fifteen years old I lived with my uncle. After that I was sent to school, but I always returned to him during the holidays. I was like most Indian children, excitable, sensitive, and very wilful and passionate. An only child, I had been idolized; and there was no one to contradict me or share in my parents' affection. Besides which, native servants always make children imperious, by never attempting to cross them, and allowing them to tyrannize to their heart's content. To counterbalance these faults, which might have rendered me unhappy or fractious, I had been gifted with a very bright and joyous disposition; one that saw sunshine everywhere, and was never dimmed except by a passing cloud of temper. Unlike most high flowing spirits, which are subject to equally extreme fits of depression.

And now I must describe my English home. I will begin with the inmates. I liked my uncle; most people feared him, but I did not. He was ever ready to bear with me, and make excuses for my

faults. He was proud of me, I believe, for I was quick and clever, and had pleased him by excelling in music, drawing, and other accomplishments. My aunt was very kind. Many thought her cold—she was not so to me. Sometimes she was satirical, but her manner was always quiet. I think her voice was the sweetest I ever heard. She was thoroughly sensible, and a wonderful manager. Her accounts, so neatly, accurately kept, were a study for me. I have passed many a pleasant hour in listening to her tales of my mother's early life. She was her only sister, and they had been deeply attached to each other. I had four cousins. Arthur was the eldest; he was preparing for holy orders. I loved him the best—as much as if he had been my own brother. At any time I was ready to bend my will to his gentle arguments. We were such a contrast. He was so steady and quiet, with a sweet yielding temper, but yet not wanting in firmness. He could not be persuaded to do what he thought was wrong, and so I respected as well as loved him. When he was with me, I felt all the better feelings of my nature drawn out. He soothed my restless excitable spirit. I was ashamed to show how wilful I could be, and yet he knew me well, for I used to impose upon him the trouble of listening to all my grievances. Charles was the other son. Our dispositions jarred. He tried

to be the master, and I rebelled. He was lively and hasty, but warm-hearted. "Diamond cut diamond," Arthur used to say; but, in spite of all our differences, I loved Charlie. He was handsome, whilst Arthur had no beauty of feature, although his figure was tall, and his appearance and manner very gentlemanly; indeed, the chief attraction of his face was his beautiful smile—I loved to look at it.

There were two sisters, Mary and Ellen, both older than I was. Mary was quiet and homely; intent on her household duties, district visiting, and other good occupations. There was no accomplishment or beauty to attract. She had not even a graceful way of doing good; although she never hurt or offended any one, except by what I called her "negatives," such as silence, and want of cordiality and sympathy. Ellen I never rightly understood. Her character was as deep a riddle as her handsome impassive face, which rarely betrayed her emotions, although they were strong and deep. I knew when I had vexed her by the increased reserve and distance of manner. The cloud rested between us until it gradually evaporated. It was useless to try to get rid of it by an explanation. How that used to provoke me! I would rather have received a blow or angry word than suffer from that stately chillness. I used to be at a loss how to treat her in these moods, but I was

very sure to end with a passionate remonstrance, which met with no response: yet there was much that was fine and noble in her. The misfortune was that we did not understand one another. She was what I call solidly accomplished; fond of reading, and had great taste for drawing. We had a governess, Miss Wallace, of whom I will speak more hereafter; she had been with us six years at this time, and was to leave when I went to school.

Let me now describe the house. How distinctly it rises before me! It was low, old fashioned, and rambling, not unpicturesque, with the creepers clinging fondly round it. There was a green lawn in front, and to the left a pond surrounded by willows; from the pond to the house ran a path skirted with flower-beds. A background of high evergreen hedge shut out the kitchen-garden. There, in one corner, were the prim squares which we used to call our gardens. They were bordered with "London Pride," and in each were wallflowers, rose-trees, primroses, violets, and heartseases, and beyond the precincts of the London Pride were mustard and cress, and lettuces and peas. But our gardens had lost their charm to us, and were looking sadly neglected and full of weeds at the time I speak of. The days of hoeing, and digging, and raking were over, and the little garden tools were lying covered with rust in one of

the sheds. Grown-up amusements had taken the place of childish pastimes. I am passionately fond of music, and this was another tie to draw me closer to Arthur. We had an organ, which he played beautifully, and his greatest pleasure was in listening to my music. Sometimes when he saw me vexed he used to begin a soft sacred air, and then I was compelled to fling away discontent and ill-humour and listen to him. We were the only two that cared for music; Mary had no taste for it, Ellen no ear, and Charles would listen to nothing but dance-music and lively airs.

In speaking of the inmates of the Manor House, I feel bound to mention Arthur's dog. Originally he had been named Ulysses, which was quickly abbreviated to Uly. Arthur said a dog's name ought to begin with U. It was the best and most sounding vowel; what was the use of fixing upon a word that cut itself short, like Grip, or Nettle, or Flash? It was impossible to call out such names in an imposing or authoritative manner. Uly, u—ly, u—ly, was not that an echoing sound? So Uly he was called, for Arthur's reasoning was conclusive. Besides, nobody cared for the poor animal, he was so ugly; not that I ever thought so, but all who had a right to give an opinion said he was a most uncouth creature. He had come into Arthur's possession in the following

manner:—the mother belonged to a poor man in the village, and Uly was early condemned to a watery grave, with seven brethren of the same litter. The sentence was carelessly executed, and by some good fortune Uly managed to get to the brink of the pond into which he had been thrown. The exertion of keeping afloat was proving too much for his tender age, when Arthur chanced to pass. His heart was moved with compassion for the little forlorn animal; he drew it out of the water and brought it home, wet as it was, in his coat-pocket to warm it. Every one laughed at Uly and at Uly's master, but Arthur remained staunch to his little *protégé*, and so under his fostering care it grew up to years of discretion, remarkable for three points—extreme ugliness, devotion to its master, and a pair of huge brown intelligent eyes, which Arthur declared were enough to redeem any amount of unsightliness. Certainly when I was a child I should have been angry with any one who hinted at the possibility of Uly being without a mind. I was the only person in the house besides Arthur who cared for the dog; however Uly vouchsafed but seldom to take any notice of me, though I tried hard to win his affections. He was Arthur's shadow; sleeping at his door at night, seated under his chair by day, or following close at his heels whenever he left the house; never in any-

body's way however, for he was under perfect discipline, and Arthur had taught him to remain in the background unless his services were required in a mouse hunt, or to keep guard. Surely such affection is not to be despised, even though it be bestowed by a little outcast cur. I mention Uly because he will appear again more than once in the course of my tale.

I shall commence my story with the midsummer holidays, which found us all gathered together at the Manor House. I was in my sixteenth year. Finding myself cleverer than my companions, and having, unfortunately for my humility, heard my talents praised by injudicious people, I had made up my mind that I must write something. Oh, if I should ever attain to the dignity of an authoress, how happy I should be! This idea had taken such hold of my fancy, that I determined to begin at once; and now I shall recall my first attempt at authorship, I should say rather, my first game of playing at writing.

It was one of those wet, drizzling days, which makes it impossible to attempt a walk. I had nothing to do, so I collected pens, ink, and paper, and retired to a quiet room, first having wound myself up to a proper pitch of romance, by playing a favourite and very melancholy air. What should I write about? My thoughts were an *embarras de richesses*; but at last I chose one thread from the tangled maze, and

not caring how soon it should break off, began recklessly. I had become interested and was completely absorbed in my imaginary scenes, when Charles burst into the room.

“What are you doing, Agnes? Writing, I declare. Who’s your friend? She must excuse you for a minute, because I want you to find that book I lent you last night. Hallo! what nonsense is this?” He was looking over my shoulder by this time, and I, with crimson face, was vainly endeavouring to cover the closely written sheet with my hand.

“Oh! Charles, how can you? What right have you to peep over my shoulder in that way? It is too bad. You seem to take a pleasure in teasing me. If you had asked me gently and kindly for your book, it would have been provoking enough to be disturbed; but I cannot suffer this interference.”

I was trembling with excitement and vexation, when Arthur, hearing the loud tones of my voice, came in, quietly asking, “What is the matter?”

“The matter is,” said Charles, “that I came in here to ask for a book which I had lent to Agnes, and find her absorbed in penmanship. I could see it was no letter by the size of the sheet; so I ventured to look over my ladyship’s shoulder, and you see what a storm I have raised. She is writing a book

to teach us all how to keep our tempers. Well, I leave her to you."

With these words he left the room, to my intense relief.

"Is he not aggravating, Arthur? I know you won't laugh at me, so I don't mind your seeing what I was writing. I can't tell you how interested I was, having just arrived at the *comble de bonheur*,—the hero declaring his love. And now I must leave him, on his knees, until I find time and inclination to go on with my story."

Arthur looked amused. The dear smile was on his face, and I was getting calm.

"Well, if your hero has been foolish enough to go down on his knees, I have no pity for him; and were I the lady I should give a decided, 'No, I thank you.' But, Agnes, what made you think of writing? It is a funny fancy to seize you so suddenly, and unless you are writing to some purpose, and with a good motive, I confess I think it is waste of time, to sit here covering sheet after sheet. No, don't think me unkind; I have no doubt you have the power and the talent, but do you not think it would be wiser to consider the matter a little? You have not the experience or knowledge of character yet, which is required for an authoress."

"Oh, Arthur! I did not think you would dis-

courage me. It is and has been the longing wish of my heart to write something worth reading, and I am sure, if I try, I shall succeed."

"And so am I; but I repeat, you must try in the right way and with a good motive. I do not doubt your capacity, but I mistrust your method. I have not read what you have written; but tell me, have you ever seen any one like your hero or your heroine?"

"No; but I have read of them."

"That won't do. Unless you have your characters from real life, I will not say every part of every character, but the outlines, and fill them up consistently, you cannot draw a natural person. There is a profusion of trashy shilling novels written now-a-days; they find readers, which is surprising enough, but it is sad to think how many precious hours have been wasted over them. People think themselves entitled to waste their time in a railway-carriage, but what a pity it is that it should be squandered on such rubbish. Now can anything be more exaggerated, sentimental, ludicrous, than the characters in those novels? Take my advice, and until you know more of the world, practise yourself in essays and shorter fragments; study your language, think over your subjects, and then—when your style is formed—you may begin to try something more difficult."

"Well, perhaps you are right. You convince me

against my will, Arthur ; but do now set me a subject, and then you will be able to judge whether I have it in me. I will submit to your pulling my composition to pieces, because you won't be harsh or rough."

"I consent on condition that you will not rebel against my discipline. Do you agree to be obedient?"

"First let me hear your conditions."

"Number one, burn this."

"Oh, that is hard ! And all my labour will be wasted."

"No ; not if you have learnt a lesson of patience."

"Well, let me think over it. I have not yet read what I have written. What is your next rule?"

"That you shall only write on such subjects as I give you, and at such times as I choose."

"This from my kind Arthur ? I never thought *you* would try to be severe with me."

"Nay, I was only *proposing* my scheme for your approval. If you don't choose to be put into harness, I can't compel you. But I am mistaken if you do not rather take pleasure in difficulties. To-morrow morning you shall give me your answer."

"Oh no ! I will make up my mind at once ; and if I promise I am bound to perform ; so now I throw myself on your clemency!"

"Impetuous Agnes ! You may repent your rash-

ness, and you may live to thank me ; but I will hold out no hope of being merciful to you, so beware ! To-morrow I will give you your subject ; and now put on your bonnet and calm your feelings with a little exercise. Mamma sent me up to tell you she wished you to take advantage of the break in the weather, and we have already wasted time."

I could not repress a sigh as I cast a look at my dear ill-fated manuscript, and I was in no humour for walking. It was hard to be pulled down thus roughly from such an elevation of romance, and I could not look pleased. I was cross to Ellen, peevish to Mary, and sullen to Charles,—a bad beginning.

Next morning, on awaking, my first thought was, —What will Arthur give me to write about ? I was all impatience to know, and could scarcely wait till breakfast was over.

" Well, Arthur, what is it to be ? "

" Are you prepared for the worst ? Pack up your romance, take down your common sense and reasoning powers, and write me an essay on Duty."

" You are not really going to give me such a stupid subject ? Why, I cannot even define the word, much less write about it for an hour."

" You are wrong there ; it is often more difficult to give a clear concise definition than to write an essay. But in this case I must be firm. I told you I would

not allow our treaty to be infringed. Surely you are not going to show the white feather already?"

"Anything else in the world would have been easier than this. But no, I will not give up, only I feel I shall get discouraged and out of heart."

"Ah, Agnes! if this little contradiction quenches your zeal, how would you bear rough unsparing criticisms? Why, it would break your heart to see one of your cherished manuscripts, that you had laboured at and pondered over, cast aside as not worthy attention. When you talk so enthusiastically of the glory of authorship, think of the heart-aches authors have to endure, the sickening pangs of hope deferred. Depend upon it, writing is not light pleasant work!"

I have thought of these words often since. I have realized them in lonely hours, when I had no dear Arthur to soothe and cheer me; and I thank him for all he said; it was so good and true.

Mine was no easy task. While I sat looking at the blank sheet, I almost despaired of writing anything. At last, one drowsy heavy thought defined itself, and, although it looked poor enough on paper, I gathered courage from seeing some commencement made, and my ideas thawed gradually. So I finished, with a sad consciousness that I had written nothing bright or clever.

"At least, I have done my best, Arthur," I said, as I put the manuscript into his hand. "It is humiliating to have to confess this, but the subject is so dry, you must make excuses for me!"

I sat watching his eye as he read, and felt nervous.

"It is better than I expected, and yet I am disappointed," he said, when he had finished.

"What can you mean by that?"

"First of all, it is better, because you have expressed yourself concisely and in good language. I have no fault to find with the style, except that it is evident you have not written heartily."

"No wonder, for my head quite ached over it—but what disappoints you?"

"You have not looked at your subject from a right point of view, and, until you learn to do that, you will write to little purpose, or, what is worse, to *bad* purpose. You have considered duty as a heathen might consider it. According to your representation, there is no joy, no comfort in its performance. I wonder the two-fold definition given in our beautiful catechism did not occur to you. Our Church has there so simply explained the deep meaning of the word which embraces the whole compass of the Divine commandment. We all transgress every day, every hour; none of us come up to the perfect standard;

and the aim is so high that we might be discouraged, were it not that 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' That makes our duty clear at once. I am very sure, if we loved as we ought, God as our Lord and Father, and man as our brother, our duty would be but the willing and joyful sacrifice which affection is ever ready to make."

I had seldom heard him speak so earnestly. I was awed, but could not bring the words home. It was like a strange language to me.

"I should have been a hypocrite, Arthur, if I had written thus, for I do not think such thoughts. Sometimes I wish I could, but I feel like one groping in the dark. I envy those who have the light. I pray that I may see it some day!"

"Agnes, never think to guide others until you have. The blind cannot lead the blind. My poor child, I grieve when I think how hard a struggle is before you. God only knows how much of sorrow you will need. A spirit like yours is not easily made low and humble, and yet it must be, before you can have that peace which passeth understanding."

Arthur always passed the twilight hour at the organ, and that was the happiest time of the day to me. I reminded him of it now. My heart was softened by what he had said; and I shall never forget the plaintive earnestness of his rich voice as he sang—

“Lead kindly light, amid the encircling gloom.”

He had touched the right chord, and my tears flowed fast.

“Yes, yes; ‘the night is dark, and I am far from home. Lead thou me on.’

“Oh, sing it again, it is so beautiful; and while you sing, I feel as if I could pray!”

He took my hand and said, sweetly and gravely, “Agnes; the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. When we do not see that light, it is because we comprehend it not.”

CHAPTER II.

I MUST now say a few words about my governess. My aunt always looked upon her and treated her as a friend. Oh, that all ladies were equally delicate and kind in their behaviour to those who are entrusted with the high and responsible duty of educating their children! How can their pupils love and esteem them as they ought if they see the governess is a secondary person in a house, only a little better than a servant? If she is not really a lady by birth, and in mind, and manners, how can she be fit to undertake such a charge; and if she is a lady, is it right or charitable, or even consistent with the cold courtesy of the world, to make the weight of misfortune doubly grievous by contemptuous or unkind treatment? Is no respect due to those who determine to make themselves independent at any cost, and not be a burden to others? All honour to the noble spirits, and all shame to such as treat them with scorn. My governess was a lady. No, gentle reader, do not smile, I repeat it. She was as much a lady as the highest born

in the land, and we were taught to treat her as such. I liked her too, but she was a little too strict; and though I always felt how good she was, she did not quite succeed in winning my love, because she thought it right always to be very stern if I had done wrong, and to make no allowances. I had a hasty, thoughtless way of speaking, which often ran into great exaggeration. This Miss Wallace could not pardon. I do not wish for an instant to make light of the fault, but it is one into which heedless children are apt to run. It should be checked at any cost, but I think it is a mistake to treat it as untruthfulness; indeed, it is generally the fault of a candid person, and is perfectly distinct from deceit. Nothing is so bad for children as to have their word doubted. I believe it is the cause of more untruthfulness than we can imagine. Miss Wallace used to charge me with having told a falsehood, when I had simply made a careless, inaccurate statement; this irritated me beyond measure.

One day I received the following letter from my father:—

“ **MY DARLING AGNES,—**

“ I AM most anxious to say a few words to you, a few grave words on something I have heard of you. I cannot let you suppose by my silence that I think

lightly of any fault which is likely to prove a great defect in my child's character. I am told that, although you do not tell intentional untruths, the principle of truth is wanting. By this I understand that you have not the quick perception and ready sensitiveness as to truth, which are the surest safeguard as to its rigid observance. The true mental discipline for the correction of this consists in great care and deliberation in all you say, so as to prevent your perception or judgment being carried away by fancy or imagination. In such a frame of mind, the quizzing or jocular exaggeration to which some are prone becomes dangerous, and should be avoided. One caution more. It is possible that the estimate of your character in this particular, which has been formed by your friends, may sometimes expose you to unfounded and unjust suspicions. Let me suppose that a distinction is in this respect apparent between the way in which your statements and those of others are received, though all are equally correct. This is no doubt very trying, and you must be prepared for it, and it must be met—not by irritation and resentment—but with patient endurance and renewed caution. I am sure you are most anxious to set yourself right in this particular. Do try; try hard, try in the right way, and God will give you success. It is not for us to say how, or in what manner, the

Almighty gives of His strength to those who ask it of Him in sincerity, in humility, and faith. I fear, my darling child, on reading over this letter, I have failed to convey to you the tender anxiety for your welfare which dictates it. Forgive me if I pain you. But if such be the result, my traitor pen ill-discharges the duty assigned to it by a loving heart."

For some minutes after reading this letter, I sat with an indignant, beating heart, confused with the novelty of getting a letter from papa which brought no joy; I then snatched it up and ran in search of Arthur, my unfailing sympathizer. He was writing in the back drawing-room, which was always his sanctum. It was not often that my face flushed, but it was crimson with emotion, and all I could do was to throw the sheet down before him, and say,—

“Read that, Arthur.”

He did so quietly, and then looked at me.

“So you have nothing to say, and that terrible accusation excites no indignation. I suppose you think it quite just.”

“Really, Agnes, I cannot speak to you unless you are going to be reasonable. Because your father in his anxiety for your good has so lovingly ventured to point out a fault, are you so ungrateful and undutiful as to be angry with him?”

“Angry with papa? Oh! no, no!” I said, bitterly; “but angry, yes, and reasonably so, with those who have dared to write so unjustly to him, and to poison his mind against his child.”

“I cannot listen if you speak in that way of my mother, Agnes.”

“I accuse no one, Arthur, in particular; indeed, I don’t well know what I am saying, you must bear with me; but, oh! it is cruel to think my father believes me capable of untruth. I have always written out to him exactly what came uppermost in my mind, and now he will have to question what I say, and all the pleasure of writing to him is gone.”

“Agnes, listen to me; you cannot think that, so long as your father says,—‘To me I believe you to be open as day, and truthful as light itself.’”

“I never read that.”

“Here it is in a postscript. You see you are too angry to be reasonable. When you read the letter calmly, you will see how true and just it is.”

“And so you, too, think me untruthful?”

“No, but very apt to exaggerate, and through thoughtlessness to give an untrue impression. Why, at this very moment, you are exemplifying your father’s words—‘allowing your perception to be carried away by imagination.’ He does not for one moment accuse you of deceit. If he had, you might with good

reason have been distressed. Listen, can you deny honestly, that you are ever inaccurate in your statements, or ever overstep the precise bounds of truth?"

"No; but that is different from telling falsehoods."

"And does your father accuse you of that?"

I looked away, and fidgeted nervously with the letter. In my heart I felt I had been unreasonable.

"I won't press you to answer me. I only want you to try and act up to the advice about not resenting. You know it is absurd to expect my mother, or any one who loves you well and wisely, not to send out a correct report of you. Now, you know your fault, you can set about correcting it."

"One comfort is, that I shall soon be going to school, and there I shall be free from suspicion, and have more chance of establishing a new character. Miss Wallace would never lose her present impression."

"Well, I am not sorry that you will not be much longer with her, because you have never rightly appreciated her excellence, and she has never thoroughly understood you. Try, for the remaining week she stays, to give her no cause for offence in this respect. Take my advice, and tell her how determined you are, with God's help, to overcome your fault; and

now, there's a dear child, run away, for I have something very particular to do this morning, and I must be quiet."

The day before Miss Wallace left, I had a long conversation with her. She was so kind, and understood me so much better than I expected, that I really began to think she would have changed her opinion of me had she remained, and I was sorry to see her go.

I was so constituted that I could not bear ridicule. From Ellen and Charles I had many sarcastic speeches. Charles made fun of me unsparingly, Ellen was quietly satirical. I disliked that most. It was her manner, more than the substance of what she said, which irritated me. Mary seldom interfered; once, when appealed to, she made a remark which Charles said "ought to have settled me." He wrung it from her.

"Is n't it conceited and nonsensical of Agnes to set up for an authoress, and sit scribbling half her leisure time?"

"Since you ask me, I will tell you that I *do* think it great waste of time and paper, but Agnes does not care for what any one says, so it does not matter what I think. If it gives her pleasure, why not allow her to amuse herself in her own way?"

This little speech cut me to the quick in many

points, and thoroughly roused my temper. It was mortifying to hear what I considered a grave and sensible study called an amusement, or waste of time, especially when I was writing on such sober subjects.

“It is well,” I said, angrily, “that Arthur is on my side. He is better, and cleverer, and kinder than any of you; and, fortunately for me, he does not think that writing and exercising the mind is a less profitable employment than stitching by the hour at an elaborate piece of embroidery. We each have our pursuits, and you have no right to interfere with mine.”

“Hear, hear,” said Charles. “My fair cousin, your forte is evidently speaking, coupled with great moderation and calmness of spirit. I’ll tell you what it is, Agnes, I like you very much when we are taking a ride together, or when playing at cricket, though you do threaten to become a woman, and leave off romping. You have plenty of pluck, and never scream, or faint, or go into hysterics: but when you mount your scribbling hobby, and do the intellectual dodge, I don’t like you a bit. It isn’t natural to you, and never will be; so pray give in.” But, to avoid further discussion, I left the room; not, however, before I heard Ellen remark, *sotto voce*, “Charles, you have made her sulky at last.” That

was worse than all ; for at that time I piqued myself (as many do) on my hastiness. Why should this be ? In a few moments of mad, inconsiderate anger, how much may be done or said ! A deed to be repented bitterly through life. A word never to be forgotten, because so vehemently, tauntingly uttered.

Arthur gave me "Temper" for my next subject. I had plenty to say and plenty to think about it, but I was ashamed to write what must be a deliberate condemnation of myself; acting, as I did, on angry impulses, so contrary to my knowledge of what was right. However, I did write it all, and my critic expressed approval.

"Ah ! this has more life in it than your first essay had. It is a pity you are so inconsistent in practice. But you have quite overlooked one point—the advantages of a quick temper."

"Now, Arthur, you are talking nonsense."

"I may have expressed myself ambiguously, but I mean what I say. If a person, with a naturally quick, ardent temper, is enabled, by Divine grace, to restrain it when the occasion does not justify anger ; and yet is capable of feeling and expressing indignation, when it is right and necessary to do so, he is to be envied, because he fulfils the law, 'Be ye angry, and sin not.'"

"Now I understand you better. But I can have

no such comfort ; my anger is ever in an unjust cause."

" I trust it will not always be so. God's grace is sufficient for you. It is so beautiful to see a passionate temper under the control of religion. Such dispositions are generally accompanied with a heartiness and energy which are wanting to a naturally easy, amiable character. Here is my difficulty. I cannot understand your excitability and vehemence ; and while I am without your temptation to sin against charity and meekness, I am in danger of the guilt of lukewarmness, which we know is so hateful to God. I have daily to fight against indolence. The day passes so quietly and dispassionately with me, that when I come to review it, I am not remorse-stricken with the recollection of any very startling fault. All seems of the same dull, misty grey ; no sins as red as crimson. I am grieved because I cannot experience the deep repentance which expresses itself, ' The remembrance of them is grievous unto us ; the burden of them is intolerable.' Now, your temper should keep you watchful, and keep you humble."

" I confess it is very humiliating : there is not a day in which I do not give way to my temper, and yet I pray ; how is it that I do not overcome ? I despair of ever doing so."

“I believe for the very reason you give, Agnes—you despair. Our Lord has only promised to answer our best and purest petitions on one condition, ‘Believe that ye shall receive.’ You begin and end your prayer in unbelief and impatience. Is it not so?”

“Yes, I believe you are right. I cannot persuade myself that I shall ever be sweet tempered; not easily provoked.”

“I think it quite possible that you may never quite root out the inclination to be quick and hasty. Would it not be well to look upon it as a trial—a cross, the patient bearing of which will afford you an opportunity of showing your love to God?”

“I should like to think that I could so turn an enemy into a friend, but it would be no easy victory.”

I love to recall these conversations; however imperfect the record, it brings back the past to me. How dimly bright it looks through the mist of tears!

I thought a great deal that evening over what Arthur had said. His words always had weight with me, because he was consistent, which Mary and Ellen were not. I believe they acted on the highest principles, but something was wanting in both: I could *love* neither, though they liked me, and were wonderfully forbearing in general; I must have tried them much at times.

Charles and I used to take long rides together. We were both very fond of the exercise ; and as Mary never rode, and Ellen was too timid on horseback to admit of enjoyment, the pony was almost always at my service. Charles had a handsome, high-spirited horse, by name 'Sir Bedivere,' which he managed admirably. One day, about the time I am writing of, we were tempted by the beauty of the weather to extend our ramble until we arrived at what we called the race-course. Not that it had ever been used for that purpose, but it was well adapted for it. The soft green turf stretched away, along the summit of one of the low hills which are so peculiar to English scenery ; unbroken by a cart-rut, undisturbed by the plough, but evidently a pasturage, from the myriad hoof-prints left by the cattle that grazed there. Not a tree or shrub was there to break the peaceful monotony of the verdant sweep. We overlooked the country for miles, and dismounted to enjoy the view, and give our steeds a little rest, and nibble at the grass. Suddenly a thought struck me.

"Charles, I must try your horse ; change the saddle for me. *Do*, please. I could not have a better opportunity. It will be so delightful."

"But, Agnes, I don't think papa would like it. I know you've no end of pluck, and all that, and as far

as I am concerned you are welcome ; but suppose anything were to happen, what would he say ? ”

“ Oh, but nothing will happen, and I’m sure I may. *Do*, like a good fellow, change the saddle. I must have my way, and am willing to take all the responsibility.”

So Charles, secretly pleased at the idea, but thinking it right to demur, acceded to my request, on condition that I would let him hold the rein until I saw how the horse was going to behave. I mounted, and after satisfying Charles’s conscientious scruple, as I called it, struck the horse smartly with the whip, and he needed no second bidding to mend his pace. Charles mounted the pony to follow, I, exclaiming with delight at the long easy canter, so different to the pony’s short quick pace. All went smoothly for some time, and of course all idea of changing steeds again was negatived by me. As we began to near home (we were about three miles off), a cart appeared before us, laden with long thin planks of timber, which swayed with the motion of the vehicle. At this Sir Bedivere pricked up his ears, and uttered an indignant snort. I was determined he should pass it. The question was which should gain the day. Charles entreated me to fall back and let the obnoxious cart get out of sight, but I would not listen.

“ No, my beauty, you shall not be the master ;

come," I said, patting his neck and coaxing him, "come, don't be foolish."

But Sir Bedivere chose to be foolish, and gave a little stronger expression of disapproval.

"Very well, sir, if not by fair means, then——"

And I raised my whip and struck him hard and often. With a spring he bounded off, past the cart and timbers and all, head bent low, and rushing madly, blindly along. I seized the reins, and held them with a firm grasp, but he did not heed or seem to feel it. He needed no guiding. It was a new and strange excitement, but I was beginning to feel exhausted with the rapid motion and swift passage through the air. At last I began to pull the curb first with one hand, and then with the other. We were close to the house, and I feared he would rush into the stable; however, to my surprise, he pulled up suddenly at the door, so suddenly as almost to throw me out of my seat.

"Now," I said, "my fine fellow, it was for your pleasure you came here, you shall go back for mine." And turning his head round, I made him gallop off sorely against his will. About half-an-hour afterwards I returned, both myself and horse fairly tired out. My uncle was the first person I met.

"Agnes, is it possible? Are you mad? What has happened?"

"I have been riding Sir Bedivere," I said, haughtily, "and he and I had a little fight, from which I have come off victorious."

"This won't do, Agnes. I am not often severe with you, but I am really angry now. You must have known quite well that I should not approve of this wild freak. As a punishment, I shall forbid your riding again for many months. That horse is far too valuable to trust in such hands as yours. If you chose to put your own neck in peril, you should at least have had regard for my property."

I was too angry to feel or acknowledge that I had done wrong, and escaped as quickly as possible to my own room. I could think of nothing but my victory, and considered it most unjust of my uncle to doubt my power of managing the animal, after I had given such convincing proof of my good horsemanship. I met Charles as I came downstairs.

"Well, we've got into a pretty scrape," he said; "papa is really angry now, and says he is determined you shall not ride for some months to come. You haven't managed him so well as you did Sir Bedivere. I felt quite proud of you, Agnes; you do credit to my teaching."

"I'm glad it ended so well; but do you really think uncle will keep his word about my not riding? If he had not made me angry, I believe I should have said

I was sorry and had been foolish, but I can't now. My pride won't let me. You know I prepared to take the consequences."

And so I steeled myself into what I considered a very proper state of fortitude and determination. No, I did not really consider it such ; my conscience was silently witnessing that I was in an obstinate and hard temper. Being fond of my uncle, and a great favourite of his, I used always to look upon it as my right to hand him his tea, cut his newspaper, present him with a footstool, and make him otherwise very snug and comfortable. To-night I relinquished my post to Mary, this was a quiet acknowledgment that I was at war. I looked as if I did not care, but really I missed the kind kiss and affectionate word I always got as my recompence. Arthur fixed astonished and inquiring eyes upon me, but I pretended not to notice him, and to be engrossed in my book—although I had read the same sentence a hundred times, and could attach no possible meaning to it. I was generally the fastest talker, so the conversation flagged very perceptibly. I knew the storm would burst soon, and at last my uncle spoke.

"I am glad to see Agnes is ashamed of herself. You did not hear what she was mad and naughty enough to do to-day. As I was coming home, whom should I meet but that child on Sir Bedivere ; both

horse and rider as tired and exhausted as they could be, with a fierce gallop of some miles across country. Of course the creature had run away, and it was utterly impossible for her to check him."

All eyes were turned on me ; my colour rose, and my heart beat thick and fast as I gave my answer. "It's quite true that Sir Bedivere began by running away with me, but I deny that I was not able to manage him. Charles will tell you how completely he was mastered ; and I am not the least ashamed of myself. If it were in my power, I would do the same thing again."

"Fortunately, I can put it out of your power, Agnes. I intended at first to make your punishment somewhat lighter ; but now I am resolved, and every one here is witness to what I say, that for six months from this day you shall ride neither horse nor pony. I do not choose to argue with you, and therefore I beg that you will not mention the subject again."

I did not attempt to answer, feeling it would not do. I could have burst out crying, but by a strong effort kept back the tears : I was so wretched. At last I left the room, and taking refuge in the solitude of the library, there tried to plume my ruffled feathers. I had been standing for some time at the window watching the twilight, and feeling strangely out of tune with the peaceful scene, but not wishing to

accuse myself, when Arthur came in. I expected he had come to lecture me, and so I said nothing; but he knew me too well to begin with reproof. He took my hand gently, and said, "Poor Agnes." I burst into tears, and that did me good, and melted the hard temper.

"Thank you, Arthur; that was what I wanted—a kind word."

"But do you deserve it? I said 'poor' because I pitied you for the misery you are inflicting on yourself."

"How? I cannot see that."

"Oh yes, you do, Agnes. You are trying to deceive yourself: but you are quite conscious of your fault, and until you acknowledge it you will not be happy."

He waited for a reply, but I gave none.

"You are gratified at your feat of horsemanship, but you have failed miserably in a better endeavour; and so you are a greater coward than Ellen, who is too timid to mount the pony."

Still no answer.

"I cannot leave you in this temper, Agnes—you must not kneel down to pray to-night, until you have asked papa's pardon. It would be mockery; and I am sure you could not sleep without having offered up a prayer."

“But, Arthur, I *cannot*, after all I have said. I believe you are right; but how can I stoop to ask pardon, after so decidedly denying that I had been in the wrong?”

“You will not do it in your own strength—look higher. It is *right*. Ask help of God; for it is the devil that distorts what is noble into what is humiliating—just now you are listening to him. I am waiting for your answer?”

“Well, Arthur, I will.”

“God bless you, Agnes.”

“Now, leave me for a few minutes. I have promised.”

I had a sharp struggle with myself; and often went to the door, and often turned back again. At last I gathered all my courage in the thought, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” I felt that I must not linger a moment longer. Before my aunt and cousins I walked up to my uncle’s chair. I could scarcely speak, but I hurried out the words, “Uncle, I have come to say that I am very sorry for my wilfulness to-day—and more sorry still for my angry stubborn temper this evening. I hope you will forgive me?”

He kissed my cheek, and said, “That is right, Agnes; you are forgiven readily: but you know the sentence about your not riding cannot be reversed.”

"Oh no! I did not wish that; and I feel that it is quite just. Thank you, Uncle."

I went back to my seat, very nervous, conscious of the surprise my conduct had occasioned; but very happy, and rewarded by a sweet smile from Arthur.

CHAPTER III.

A FEW days after the above incident occurred, I had a pleasant surprise.

“Agnes, a most interesting travel-stained box arrived this morning, addressed to you,” said my uncle; “can you guess where it came from, or who sent it?”

“India!—papa!—Oh, where is it? Who will open it for me? Do all come at once; how very delightful; but these boxes always take so long to open.”

“Thank my foresight. I knew my impetuous niece full well, and so I have had it all prepared; you will not be kept waiting a minute.”

“Now that’s what I call really kind. Most people would have thought fit to give me a lesson in patience, and looked on in enjoyment of my torture, while the half-hour’s operation was being performed. Why here comes the box to speak for itself. What a splendid fellow, and so large!”

We all gathered round in a circle, and I plunged both hands into the bed of cotton-wool, to extract the

treasures, instantly dispersing an Indian scent, which delighted our English noses. (All who have opened an Indian box know what this indescribable Indian scent is, which pervades everything.) With eager hasty hands I was unpacking and displaying my riches. Carved ivory, painted ivory figures ; carved sandal-wood, filigree silver ornaments, embroidered scarves. There was something for everybody, and at the very bottom lay the gem of all, "A likeness of papa for his dear child." It was folded in many covers ; but at last all were removed, and there my own precious father's smile greeted me. A little grimy photograph, but dearer than the most costly miniature. No flattery, nature's own pencilling. And now I must consider it. He is sitting at the door of his tent, with his writing-table by him ; pen in hand, he is looking at his child ; and though he cannot see her, he knows the look will reach her and be recorded truly. He seems weary, and the hair is pushed back from the noble forehead. "It is a plain face," people say who look at features ; but there is such beauty in it to my mind. The beauty of a calm, great, gentle spirit. I have quite forgotten him (I mean his appearance) ; sometimes I think I should recognise his voice if I could hear it. I am speaking in the present ; but that hour when I sat with the likeness in my hand by the drawing-room window of

the Manor House, was ten years ago. The faded features, as it lies beside me now, witness to that. Yes; that scrap of paper is on my desk, while he, the living original, can never smile again on me, until we meet in heaven. How I have wandered from my subject. Our thoughts are beyond control sometimes; they break away at the sight of any little memento such as this.—I must return to my Indian box.

“Well, Agnes, what do you think of it?” said Mary.

“How can you ask such a question, and how can I answer it? There is no artistic excellence, since it is a photograph, and I am no judge of its merits as a likeness,” I said, with tears in my eyes. “You know I was only four years old when papa left me. But do (all who can) tell me, whether it is really like.” I now allowed it to pass round for inspection. Some thought it too grave, spite of the smile, but all considered it to be very like.

“Then I don’t mind the gravity,” I said; “indeed, I think that grave smile so sweet. The weary gravity was caused by his work—the smile was the thought of me.” And so, returning the photograph to its covers, we began to re-examine and admire the other contents of the box. That dear thoughtful papa had chosen the different gifts so well. My aunt

received a scarf; my uncle a handsome cashmere dressing-gown with a curious Indian name (it was docketed a "Choga"). There were old coins for Arthur; silk pocket-handkerchiefs for Charlie (who, by the way, was somewhat of a dandy); he was gratified at their being plain white, which he pronounced to be "quite the cheese."

Mary's share was a small sandal-wood netting-box; Ellen's, a carved sandal-wood pencil-holder; and all the rest fell to me. No—I forgot to mention a plain white warm shawl for old Nurse. It was called a "kampoor Chuddah," and the dear old lady enjoyed the name amazingly. Of course she tried to remember it, and couldn't. Then she laughed heartily, and we all laughed. The soft white folds were very becoming, and we complimented her till she didn't know which way to look. I slept with papa's likeness under my pillow that night. Ellen asked what good that would do; and matter-of-fact Mary said I should crumple it. In spite of both, I followed my own inclination, and certainly did dream of papa all night long—a great deal of nonsense, with a little spice of sense and truth. Ellen would not allow that the picture under the pillow had anything to do with it.

Arthur was very fond of reading, and so studious, that I said nothing but his love for music kept him from becoming a book-worm. For some hours every

morning, Ellen, Arthur, and I used to read together ; we girls listening, and working, or drawing the while, and Arthur the reader. Reading aloud has its advantages and its drawbacks ; and it is so popular a practice that it requires a little moral courage to utter a word of disparagement against so good a custom. For once I will gather resolution, and brave the laugh that I have no doubt many will raise against my objections. A light and entertaining book, which requires no deep thinking, is the book to read aloud ; then we share our enjoyment with others, and lose nothing. But I confess that I, for one, entirely miss the benefit of a grave, solid work when it is read aloud. I cannot stop the reader while I puzzle out a difficult passage ; and my attention constantly wanders, or is a page or two in arrear. If I had the book all to myself, I should re-read or pause at my inclination.

However, those morning-hours were very pleasant. Sometimes we adjourned to an arbour which Charles had constructed ; or sat under the shade of a fine Portugal laurel. If it was wet, we took refuge in the library. Charles was far too restless a spirit to sit for a quarter-of-an-hour listening to anything. In sunshine or rain, he was roaming the country, either on horseback or on foot with his fishing-rod. He "wasn't going to waste the vacation in poring over books."

Mary seldom joined us, as she was busy with her own occupations. After the reading was over, we used to discuss our subject and author. I think that impressed everything more vividly on our minds.

Twice a-week Arthur and I used to take singing-classes at the village school. He drilled the boys, and I taught the girls. Our rector, a good, kind-hearted, old gentleman, had no notion of music, and was very glad that we should take the trouble off his hands. He allowed us to have the entire management of the singing in church. So we set to work *con amore*, and really our pupils did us credit. The result of our endeavours was a pleasing harmony of voices, and we were careful to choose good simple chants and hymns. By degrees the children learnt to keep their parts, and modulate their voices. There was one blind boy amongst the scholars, who had a rich sweet voice. He was an apt pupil, as nothing could distract his attention from his lesson, and he threw so much earnestness into his music, for he loved it, as the blind generally do. I could hear his clear ringing notes rising above all the chorus. Often he used to come in the evening to take an extra lesson, although he had indeed outstripped all our teaching, and was soon able to assist us by instructing the younger children. The church was a beautiful, grey, stone building—several centuries old, and covered

with ivy—modern alterations had spoilt the interior, and the walls were covered with ugly staring tablets. The large square pews were so tall that one felt buried in them. Still my eyes had become accustomed to the building as it was, and I scarcely wished it altered, even for the better. I heard people cry out against the galleries which blocked up the fine old Norman arches; but I knew nothing about architecture, and the galleries were endeared to me by association. I had liked to sit in the pew upstairs with nurse, when the one downstairs was too full to allow room for me. For my head was far below the level of the square pew in those days. I was very small, and often got very weary; and so in the naughtiness of my heart I was glad to be in the gallery, so that I might cast timid looks about me. The greatest charm of the church to my mind was the beautiful chime of bells; I would not have exchanged them for all the architectural beauty of Christendom. Many a calm summer evening, many a cold dark winter's night, I have sat listening to those bells, till the tears gathered in my eyes, I knew not why. The sound was so unearthly; so sadly, mournfully, wildly sweet; like whispers from another world. What do people mean by *merry* bells? They never sound *merry* to me; I should like to listen to them on my death-bed.

There was a chase at Dudleigh, and beyond that a pretty wood, where we used to go in search of violets and cowslips for "our gardens," when we were children. It abounded in blackberries and nuts; but although it was not the season for either of these delicacies, it was proposed that we should start some fine morning and spend the day in the wood, taking a substantial luncheon with us. The proposal met with the approbation of all the younger members of the family, and our united persuasions induced my aunt to consent to be one of the party.

The appointed day happened to be bright, and warm, and sunny; made on purpose for a pic-nic, I said. So, very early we were busy making preparations. My aunt was thoroughly kind, and entered into the spirit of a pleasure party in a way that always made it pass off well. Mary's good sense told on these occasions: she was sure to have remembered and brought many little things that added to comfort, and which nobody but Mary would have thought of.

My aunt and Arthur went in the pony carriage. Charles and we three girls walked. We were all in good temper, and happy, and the distance was not great enough to tire us. Arrived at the wood, Arthur unharnessed the pony, and tied him to a tree to graze. Then we selected a pleasant place of rendez-

vous. Ellen sat down to sketch, Charlie walked off with his fishing-rod. Mary and my aunt took out their work, and I sat idle, revelling in the bright, warm sunshine—the lights and shadows scattered in fantastic beauty beneath the grand old oaks, and the small white feathery clouds chasing each other overhead, or rather quietly, dreamily following where the wind impelled them. I don't know why I am attempting to describe what has been described thousands of times, by more able pens than mine.

“How can you all be so busy?” I said, “I could not enjoy myself at all if I were to do anything.”

“But I,” answered Mary, “am much happier while my hands are employed. I hear the birds, and the running water, and the hum of insects, as well as you do.”

“Ah! but when your eyes are fixed on your work, you cannot see this exquisite carpet of flowers, or the lights and shadows, or the clear blue sky.”

“Ellen sees that.”

“Yes; but *she* looks at everything critically and inquiringly. She is considering at this moment whether her fore-ground requires burnt sienna with the yellow ochre, and next she will be tormented with an indescribable shadow colour: perhaps, after all her labour, she will be disgusted with a complete failure. Now I am free from all such disturbing

doubts, and can give myself up to the dreamy, delicious, half-sad, but entirely pleasant state which such a scene and summer day induces. It is sacrilege to talk, for even talking spoils the illusion; but I want Arthur to find words for my thoughts."

"That I can do readily, or I am much mistaken. For the last quarter-of-an-hour I have been mechanically repeating to myself that line of Keble's,

'The languid sweetness seems to choke my breath';
but it ends poorly—

'And sigh, and half could wish my weariness were death.'
I don't quite like that—it is morbid; but the first words are very true."

"Yes; they did not occur to me. How strange it is that there should always be so much sadness coupled with enjoyment!"

"I don't think so," said Arthur; "because happiness is so imperfect in this world. The greater our joy, the more painful it is in proportion. We feel so acutely *something* is wanting; or else that it is too much for us to bear, and is oppressive by its intensity."

"I wonder whether I shall feel that when I meet papa. Sometimes I think, what shall I look forward to after that. Just now, I am inclined to pity all who have not such a very bright spot to keep their eyes fixed upon."

“But we all have something in this world, or fancy we have; and when that is reached, we begin to hope again. I wonder if any one ever feels—‘this is the happiest time of my life; I shall never be so happy again?’”

“Well, in a modified sense, I do, Arthur,” answered his mother. “I am sure I cannot be happier. With husband and children around me, good health, and a bright home; what more could I have? The only shadow that crosses my path is the thought—how long will it be so with me? Sorrow must come soon. It is the lot of all, and I have been so long exempt. Of one thing I am sure. It will only come in God’s own good time; and I should not anticipate *that*.”

“I know an old woman in this parish,” said Arthur: “she is blind, and deaf, and rheumatic; her family have dropped off one by one, and she is left alone. The alms-house is her home, and she will not leave it, except to be put into her grave; but *she* is looking forward, too: and her prospect is so bright that she would exchange with no one. I never see her but I think I would willingly suffer all she has suffered, to have her clear and happy faith.”

“I wish I had the faith; but I cannot yet say the suffering would be welcome,” I said; and then we all sat silent for some time, thinking gravely

At last I got up to see how Ellen's sketch was progressing.

"It is very prettily done, and promises well. I wish I had your clear, crisp touch ; at that stage my sketches always look deplorable. I don't want to disparage, but now, Ellen, *do* let me talk a little nonsense, and listen patiently. I am out of humour with my own idleness, and so I shall relieve my feelings by pulling your work to pieces. After all, is not that a ridiculous representation of a mass of foliage ? Do analyse it. The effect at a distance is good, you will say. It is impossible to paint myriads of leaves ; and so, in despair, you are driven to make bold dashes with your brush. Then, as for the foreground, here is a wild confusion of indescribable tints ; but where are the flowers ? Why, of course, you can't paint *them*, inlaid, as they are, like finest mosaic in the grass."

"My dear, according to your argument, sketching from nature is an absurdity."

"So it is ; and yet one of Hunt's groups, bunches of flowers, and birds' nests, with a background of twigs, moss, and stone, is a complete deception."

"But one would soon weary of looking at facsimiles of birds' nests and flowers. I like bold subjects."

"So do I, really ; but the fact is, I am in a con-

tradictory humour. I have been sitting at the foot of that tree, scrutinizing minute beauties, until I am in love with them. Look here; this green is so brilliant, you dare not paint it truly—and here is vivid colouring! Crowded into this small space are golden trefoil, bright blue veronica, daisies, wild geranium, and woodroffe. Is it not beautiful? And then these dainty grasses, with tremulous blossoms, and the wee downy tufts of the moss flowers! ”

But a summons to luncheon terminated my harangue; and we were soon engaged in the discussion of cold pie, salad, and ginger beer. I was not idle all day; for before we left the wood I made a beautiful wreath for the tea-table of wild flowers and ferns. It soon withered; I had chosen a very evanescent reminiscence of the day's pleasure. Ellen's sketch long outlived it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE holidays were drawing to a close. I was looking forward, half with pleasure, half with nervousness, to the novelty of school life. Ellen and Mary had never left home, so my ideas of school (founded on what I had heard from various young lady acquaintances) were rather vague and terrible. Charles was to return to college when the vacation ended; but the stayers at home said they would miss me very much. My aunt busied herself in thoughtful arrangements for my comfort. I was incurably untidy, which had always been a distress to her. Charlie was the only one in the house who kept me in countenance. An earnest appeal was made to me when all my boxes were packed, and the list of my things drawn up in my aunt's neat hand. "Now do, there's a dear child, make an effort to be tidy. I have started you fairly; and, now you are leaving your hoards of curiosities and rubbish at home, it ought not to be difficult—will you try?"

"Indeed I will; but you must not be vexed if I

fail. I have tried so often, and you know neither fines nor punishments have succeeded in curing me of untidiness."

"It won't do at school, Agnes. You will find that to your cost; but I won't despair of you yet. Now here is my parting present—a desk fitted with all requisites,—stamps to last you for some time. What I want you to use regularly is this account-book. Your pocket-money is liberal and ample; and I shall be so pleased if you will bring home an exact calculation of all you spend."

"If anything will make me do so, this charming present will. You have forgotten nothing. But do you know, something warns me half the fittings will be lost before the half year is over. I never could keep penknives or pencils; and I fear many an unlucky blot of ink and drop of wax will fall on this pretty purple velvet. I always dye my unfortunate second finger unmercifully when I write for longer than two minutes at a time, while Mary and Ellen keep their hands so white and dainty, that you could not imagine they had handled a pen. Some people are instinctively neat. Now do look at this fore-finger of my left hand. I have done less work during the last month than Mary has got through to-day, and yet my finger is quite painful, and like a nutmeg-grater from being pricked."

“Because you do everything so violently, Agnes,” said Mary, laughingly. “I was watching you to-day while you were busy with your needle. Your brows were knit, and you were scowling at your work as if you owed it a grudge, you stabbed it so viciously.”

“Well, I do dislike it very much; but I was ashamed of being seen any longer with my fingers budding through my gloves. I had put off mending them so long because I had to hunt for the materials; neither thimble, scissors, nor silk were forthcoming.”

“Will this assist you in carrying out your methodical resolutions,” said Mary, putting into my hands a neat morocco case containing working materials; “this is my contribution towards the school trousseau.”

“I am sure it ought to deprive me of all excuse. How very pretty and compact! I really am quite set up; and it was very kind of you to think of me, Mary.”

“My funds are low, Agnes, so I thought I would give you a sketch of the Manor House to hang up in your room; albeit you do think sketches from nature are such absurdities, I am sure you will not despise this.”

“Indeed, Ellen, I shall prize it exceedingly. You know I was in an argumentative, contradictory

humour when I talked all that nonsense, and did not really mean it. At least I am far from depreciating the art of drawing from nature."

When the hour for leaving home arrived, I began to wish the parting over ; saying "Good-bye!" is never pleasant work. I minded leaving Arthur most.

"When will you give me another subject for an essay?" I asked. "I shall miss you so much ; but you must write me long letters, and forgive me if I only send you hasty, scanty answers. I have a presentiment I shall always be in a scramble, and struggling against getting into arrears."

"Well, I should not be surprised if you are ; untidiness and want of method always go together, and unmethodical people are invariably in a hurry. You are a sad puss in these respects, and I am sure school discipline will chafe you terribly. Promise me that in one thing you will not hurry. Do try and find time for a few verses from your Bible before you leave your room every morning ? Here is my parting present—a copy of Keble, which I have marked throughout.

"Ah ! that was good of you. To my mind a mark is a silent comment, and the best substitute for the friend's voice, emphasising the favourite passage, or saying, 'Is not that true?' or, 'How beautiful !'

I have not said, 'thank you,' but you understand how pleased I am."

At last all good-byes were said, and my uncle and I were fairly off. It was evening when I arrived at school. Girls of a shy nervous temperament feel a heart sickening at the very thought of leaving home. I never had *that*. Even at the first I only felt a little strangeness ; *now* I look back upon my school-life as a very, very happy time, that I would willingly spend over again ; and I can never hope or wish to make a dearer, truer friend than my school-mistress has ever been to me. If there were many like her, the name which now sounds so harsh and forbidding would be robbed of all its disagreeable associations, and present to our minds the idea of all that is good and gentle and worthy of esteem. A woman cannot have a more honourable office than that of educating the young of her own sex. Surely her duty is to make them good wives, and mothers, and sisters, as well as scholars. Learning is an important part of a woman's training, but it is a small part ; and unless the schoolmistress be also the friend and kind sympathiser, how can she reach the hearts of her pupils ? Girls have generally so much of veneration in their characters, that they are ready to look up almost with foolish awe and admiration to any one who has a certain presence and authority. If affec-

tion be added to this veneration, the influence of the schoolmistress is unbounded. Even in manner, way of speaking, or handwriting, they will strive to imitate their model. Is it not, then, of infinite importance that the schoolmistress should in all respects be worthy of imitation? I can bear grateful witness to the affectionate interest Miss Harley took in all that concerned us. To this day I can feel sure of her sympathy in any joy or sorrow that may befall me.

But I am anticipating, and must go back to my introduction to her.

The house was large, and the drawing-room into which we were shown elegantly furnished, and had much of a home look about it, which I had not expected to see. It did not seem entirely for show, and it was full of pretty nick-nacks, little elegancies in glass, china, and ormolu; nothing trumpery or in bad taste. On the walls were some good prints, and several water-coloured sketches and figures which I at once conjectured to be the handiwork of former pupils. From the windows we had a fine view of the sea. The gardens immediately before the house were enlivened by groups of children and girls at play, whose merry voices sounded very cheerful. At last we heard a step; the door opened and my speculations all terminated in the real Miss Harley.

She was of a good height, with dark hair, and soft intelligent brown eyes. Her dress and manner were very quiet and lady-like. I was at once favourably impressed, though her manner was slightly nervous and constrained; she kissed me so kindly, and began to talk so cheerfully, that the thin surface of reserve soon wore off. After my uncle left, I was taken down into the dining-room to assist in cutting the bread for tea. Regular lessons had not begun, and so my future school-fellows came down by twos and threes, talking fast and merrily of all that had happened during the holidays. Miss Harley joined in the conversation, and was as merry as the pupils. This was certainly not the idea I had formed of school life. There was no vulgar whispering or elbowing about "the new girl," which I had dreaded so much; indeed I soon began to think I must have known some of them before. There were a German and a French governess, both pleasant looking and young; they talked very little, but listened to all that passed with, apparently, great interest. But I must not weary my reader with a long account of school-life. Busy as it is, there is necessarily much of monotony; perhaps an incident here and there will not be uninteresting, and I am unwilling to pass over without notice an era in my life which was so important to me. I shall be glad to prove that

school is not (or rather need not be) that house of bondage under a hard task-mistress, which many suppose. A “school-girl” should be no term of reproach; the word ought to suggest the idea of a lady-like, well informed girl, only requiring the ease and composure of manner which mixing in good society gives. But then the *tone* of the school must be good, and the tone (to return to the burden of my song) depends almost entirely upon the lady who superintends it. If she is an example of all that is excellent and admirable in a christian woman’s character, she will effectually check the evils which bad schools foster. I can truly say I never heard a word at school which I should feel ashamed of having said.

Arthur was right in thinking I should find the methodical ways irksome. At some studies the allotted time passed quickly, but when grammar or geography had to be discussed I soon grew weary. My want of perseverance told much against me, and I was the untidiest in the school. My great difficulty was to be ready in time for the morning bell. I sprang out of bed the moment I was called, but did not like to postpone my reading until I was dressed; consequently there was always a scramble just at the last, and it was mortifying to see other girls ready before me who had not got up until long after they

were called. I did not feel inferior to any in talent, but was often outstripped by a more persevering pupil, and, oh! how keenly I felt such humiliation! I remember once losing my place in the French class at an examination. I had felt sure of success, and exerted myself very little. A quiet, dull, plodding girl came out head of the class. I said passionately to the master, on learning my discomfiture, "I had rather be first in the second, than second in the first."

The little man shrugged his shoulders and said, "Mademoiselle n'est pas très aimable. Il me semble qu'elle doit se soumettre d'une meilleur grâce, mais les Anglaises sont toutes fières." Having delivered himself of this opinion, he complaisantly took a pinch of snuff, and so dismissed the subject.

The young faces round the table looked panic-stricken at my audacity.

When all the day's work was over, we elder ones used often to persuade Miss Harley to let us sit up a little longer and have a quiet chat with her. These small concessions on her part, harmless relaxations of school regulations, made us so happy, and surely in no way impeded the next day's study. At such times she would sympathise with us in all the troubles of the day, or tell some anecdote of her own life, which broke down the barrier between mistress and

pupil, and made us love her better than before. Thus she encouraged our confidence, instead of keeping us at an awful, impracticable distance.

My confirmation took place in the middle of the half-year. Our clergyman was very earnest in his endeavours to impress upon us the great importance of solemn preparation for that holy rite. Seed sown at that time, although it often lies unproductive for many years, may spring up in after life and bear precious fruit. It was a sad time to me, bringing no joy, but I was not heedless; my fear was lest I should take the solemn vows upon me without sufficient earnestness and depth of feeling. Sometimes I wished to draw back; but then I knew I could not escape my responsibility by shrinking from confessing it; so, trembling at the thought of coming unworthily, I advanced with faltering steps, and heard the holy prayer pronounced, and felt the pressure of the aged bishop's hand. It brought peace and comfort; if that prayer were granted, how happy I should be!

I knew of one who would bear me in affectionate, prayerful remembrance that day. Arthur had written:—

“ DEAREST AGNES,

“ I SHALL think of you on the 15th. May God's grace defend you that you may continue His for ever, and daily increase in His Holy Spirit. Mark Keble's

words in his Hymn for Confirmation, I am sure that will be your thought—

"Felt Thee how strong, our hearts how frail,
And longed to own Thee to the death."

Before you return home I shall be ordained, but am to remain at Dudleigh to assist the rector here until I am nominated to a curacy. I am glad that I am not yet called upon to leave home, and it will be pleasant working in a parish where I know the poor people so well.

"Yours affectionately,
"ARTHUR."

On my return from the Confirmation, I found a little note on my table from Miss Harley, full of affectionate good wishes, and a book to be kept in remembrance of the event, as a gift from her. The title struck me, "Live while you Live." I spent the rest of the afternoon in my own little room, making good resolutions and praying for strength to keep them.

Our school examination was an ordeal through which we all had to pass, and we looked forward to it with dread. I suppose it is necessary to test what has been remembered, but are these severe examinations *fair* tests? I am sure I learnt up a great deal

in a red-hot sort of way for these occasions which I do not at all remember now ; indeed, I am sure much was forgotten before the holidays were over. I have such a vivid recollection of the hard work and excitement of those examinations, that I am inclined to think it was a mistake to subject us to such violent mental exertion. I am sure Miss Harley only ordered it because she thought it right. Her questions were well and wisely chosen, always the very questions that thoroughly probed our knowledge of a subject, and made us think for ourselves. Still such a quantity of information could not long be retained ; I feel ignorant now when I think of what I used to know at school. What was gained by all that extra labour ? A weekly or monthly examination would not have been so formidable, and quite as efficacious.

My veneration for Miss Harley's judgment is such that I feel it almost presumptuous to question the wisdom of any part of her system. She used to sympathise with us truly in the very trial she inflicted. It was comical to hear us carrying our complaints to her, and begging commiseration. At last the day for adding up the marks came round, the prizes were to be distributed in the evening.

We all assembled in the drawing room ; on the table lay the coveted books. I was not the eldest, but could not help hoping the first prize might be mine.

I was mistaken; another name was called first, and mine was the second. I was ashamed to confess my disappointment, so I tried to conceal it. When we bid Miss Harley good night she told me to remain with her, as she wished to speak to me. When we were alone she said, "Agnes dear, you were disappointed to-night."

"Why do you think so, Miss Harley?"

"I do not *think*, I am sure. I can read your face too well to be deceived. It is a tell-tale face, and by it I saw that you were mortified. Now I wish to tell you my reason for giving you the second prize. In point of marks you stood highest; but I do not consider mental proficiency of the *first* importance. I am not quite satisfied with your advance in the best attainments. I want to see you more gentle, less irritable, more unselfish. Your companions are all fond of you, and you do not rightly appreciate or return their kindness. I want to see in you more of that lovely Christian charity which 'doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked.' Don't be vexed at my plain speaking. I only say all this because I love you, Agnes, and want to see you strive against your besetting sins."

I was gratified to know I had attained the coveted position of first in the school, but startled and grieved by Miss Harley's grave accusation.

“ I think you are hard upon me,” I answered. “ How can any one love me if mine is such a character as you have drawn? Surely I am not quite all you say.”

“ I wish I could believe myself mistaken; but you must think seriously over what I have said, and I am sure you will acknowledge I am right. I have the comfort of knowing that, if once convinced, you will strive to correct your faults. But you are aware, Agnes, where you must seek for help. Now, good night, my child; you are looking very weary, and after the excitement of the day, sleep will be your best medicine. I am sure, if we are both spared to see the close of the next half-year (if I am not greatly mistaken in you), there will be no such cause for reproof, which you know it always grieves me to have to convey.”

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE returning to the Manor House, I was to spend a fortnight with another family circle of aunt and cousins. I seldom visited them; for my uncle (who was my father's brother) had married a fashionable worldly lady, whose influence my father feared might be bad for me—and he was right; for much as I used at the time to enjoy the gaiety of the house, it made me discontented and out of spirits when I returned to the quiet sober life at the Manor. The ennui soon wore off, but not before the watchful love of my absent father had detected it in my letters to him. So at his request I never went to see them in their London house during the season.

One of my cousins (Maude) was a lovely girl. Her two sisters were both *distinguées* looking, though not strictly beautiful. I was always well and neatly dressed; but in the company of my fashionable cousins, I felt mean and of no consequence. Their handsome silk eclipsed my plain merino. I can smile now at the recollection of my mortified self-esteem as

I contrasted my wardrobe with theirs. Girls will be foolish enough to feel this keenly.

There were to be one or two Christmas evening parties while I was in the house. I sighed as I looked at my clean white muslin, high to the throat, —but what else had I to wear? True, Maude's dress was simple white too; but it was beautifully made, and the ample skirt of gauzy tarlatane looked so fairy like. Her fair hair was set off by a wreath of pale blue flowers, and she looked lovely. She was very kind, and seeing my disconsolate face, said, "Don't look so distressed, Agnes; your dress is very nice; you can't wear artificial flowers, because they would be out of character with your high dress, but I will put in a brightening touch in a minute."

So saying, she left me, and soon returned with a handful of beautiful rose-coloured camellias from the conservatory, which she arranged very prettily amongst the braids of my hair.

"Oh thank you, Maude,—how good of you! I don't feel quite such a dirty duck now; you have a magic touch; the flowers are so tastefully disposed; if I had fumbled away at them for half an hour, I could not have arranged them half so well."

The novelty of a dance soon made me forget myself and my appearance; sometimes I was fascinated by the graceful movements of my cousins, and occasionally

a wish arose in my breast that I could look and feel as much at my ease as they did, as they laughed and chatted with their friends ; but altogether I enjoyed my evening exceedingly. There were no jealousies and heartburnings to detract from the pleasure. I did not even feel weary the next day, and expressed my surprise at this to my cousins.

“ Why, my dear, I don’t see how you could have been tired,” said Flora, the youngest. “ It is a different matter when one has danced till four o’clock in the morning five nights in the week.”

“ But surely you never do that? why it is enough to kill you.”

“ Well, we are not often *quite* so gay as that, but three balls in a week is the average amount.”

“ And that does not tire you? Why when and how do you get necessary sleep?”

“ Well, I’ll tell you how we manage.—Suppose we begin with a ball on Monday. Tuesday we are in bed till twelve or one P. M. ; then dress, take luncheon, drive in the park, pay visits, or do our shopping. Home in time to dress probably for a dinner-party, from which we return about half-past ten. Up next morning to breakfast ; then, as there is to be a ball in the evening, we must refresh ourselves with a two or three hours’ nap in the afternoon, for the sake of our complexions, &c. &c., till the season is over.”

“ And do you mean to say, you never find time for reading, writing, music, &c., and do not get dreadfully weary of life? ”

“ As for reading—last season I just managed to get through two three-volumed novels. I can always take up a book when the maid is brushing and dressing my hair. My writing powers are kept in exercise by an overwhelming amount of notes of invitation, acceptance, or refusal, and confidentials to my young lady friends. Of music there is no lack, thanks to concerts, and above all the opera.”

“ But I cannot conceive it possible that you do not get sick of all this. I am very fond of honeycomb, but I could not eat a hive full.”

“ I can only tell you that, when we return to the country, I am so overpowered with ennui for the first month, that I wonder how I am to exist till the good time comes again ; and then after a good fit of melancholy, bad temper, and worse digestion, I find that I *must* live, and so I had best live cheerily. By that time picnics and country-excursions are coming into fashion, and our house is full of guests.”

At the close of this recital I drew a long sigh, for I hardly knew what to think of it. It seemed to me such an extraordinary, distorted way of looking at life, with such a wonderfully small aim in view. First I thought it small, and then I thought it

wicked. The words of my confirmation came back to my memory, "The pomps and vanities of this wicked world." I did not venture to say much, but I did say, half aloud, half to myself, "I shall ask Arthur what he thinks."

"I declare I am tired of hearing you quote Arthur," answered Flora; "as if you and every one must pin their faith to such a stupid quiet fellow as he is."

"*Stupid!*!" I exclaimed indignantly; "*Arthur stupid!* I wish any of your military dandies and rich country gentlemen I saw last night had one thousandth part of Arthur's sense! I think I never heard people talk such vapid nonsense as they did. If *that* is what you admire, I would rather have Arthur's stupidity than *such* talent. I hope I may never see anything of gay life, if it is to blind me to all genuine excellence."

"My dear Agnes, it is really amusing to see you wax so hot in the fight. Unsophisticated little mortal that you are, I can't be angry with you, and I am sure I would not for the world put you out of conceit of your excellent Arthur. But for pity's sake don't talk so much of him. It is not quite the thing for young ladies to publish their preferences; for you must know there are always gossips eager to spread reports of love matches."

"Love matches! what *do* you mean? Flora, you

must be joking. And whether in fun or earnest," I added (blushing with anger and shame), "I wonder how you can hint at such a thing. Why, Arthur is my brother; and if I could not say everything I thought to him, and ask his advice, and treat him altogether as a brother, I should be utterly wretched. Oh! I wish you had not spoken of it, for you have put absurd uncomfortable thoughts into my head, and I shall always feel *gênée* now."

"Then you will be very silly, Agnes. At the Manor House you may do anything; it is Liberty Hall, and there is no one to make remarks—so set your mind at ease; only, my dear, remember those platonic affections are most dangerous."

But Flora's last speech did not tend to set my mind at ease. The poison so cunningly administered took effect. For the first time in my life I began to wonder *how* I loved Arthur. But I felt too indignant at my cousin's want of delicacy to think calmly. I shrank from analysing my feelings. Why should those few reckless words of my cousin raise such a tumult in my mind? I have since learnt by experience how much a few words on such a subject may do. A young guileless heart may by them lose its peace, and awake startled to find that it can never sleep quietly again. To put metaphor aside, how much misery is often caused by those vulgar jokes and

suggestions which are so current in modern society. Is it not the case that men, and women more especially, are quizzed into the belief that some one takes more than a common interest in them? and no foundation can be too slight or ridiculous to build the thoughtless vulgar joke upon. I had not then learnt this.

I shall pass over the remaining details of my visit to my gay relations. I was soon longing for my real home again, and I was not disappointed by my reception. How much we had to talk about! The separation had made me realize how fond I was of aunt, uncle, and cousins all. In the course of the day my boxes were unpacked.

“There is a little improvement in tidiness, I think,” said my aunt, slyly; “but still, my dear Agnes, many gaps in the list I gave you when you left me, and both desk and work-case looking rather the worse for wear. Come, I see the fittings are all there. I am surprised at that, and must bestow a little praise.”

“Wait a little, my dear aunt, till you know. Those are the third set I have had to buy, and my funds are exhausted; but I considered it a point of duty to leave no empty receptacle.”

“Ah! Agnes, you are incorrigible—but I won’t scold to-day.”

I took the first opportunity of discussing gay life with Arthur. He was not so shocked at the account

given by my cousin as I was, and smiled at my eager disapprobation. I was provoked. "I wish you would not smile in that mysterious way, Arthur; do speak out, and let me know what you think."

"Well then, most impatient of cousins, this is what I think. People that have been brought up, as your cousins have been, to look upon pleasure and gaiety as the business of life as soon as they emerge from the school-room, do not view it in the light of something unnatural, which to a looker-on it appears to be. You must first make this allowance for one who has lived in an atmosphere of gaiety. You have not; and being suddenly introduced into such a hot-house, you sicken at the air which is life to the exotics; not that it is *really* life to them, they are not born to such an existence, but they fancy they are, and so they pine away with ennui if they are removed into a more healthy atmosphere. But it is not graceful in the garden flowers that have been planted in a natural soil, with plenty of sunshine to cheer, and good strong breezes to harden, to look down upon their brethren of the hot-house. I can't bear to hear that self-righteous, uncharitable censure of all who live in the world, from those who live out of it. Why, depend upon it, Agnes, with your love of admiration you would have entered into it as heartily as any of your cousins do."

“ Yes, I know I should, because, although I am no beauty, and could not expect admiration on that account, I do dearly love to be thought clever and superior to other girls.”

“ Of course you do, and that would have been just as great a snare to you as a pretty face is to other girls. But you must not suppose that I approve of such a life of gaiety, because I beg you not to run into the dangerous extreme of despising those who mix in it. Be thankful that you have been shielded from such temptations. Even now, if you were thrown into the way of it, you would soon be fascinated by such a round of excitement, and quite forget how much you once thought of it.”

“ Do you think so? I cannot believe I should ever feel happy and at ease, if I were only living for enjoyment. I know I have plenty of faults, but I have no taste for the *dolce far niente*.”

“ No, I don’t accuse you of that; but you would find a balm for your conscience in a busy idleness, which is very dangerous. You would read, that you might improve your conversational powers, and take your position in society as a clever woman. You would practise, that your music might be the attraction of the evening; pore over your easel, lest you should not excel in drawing, and study languages——”

“ Oh! Arthur,” I said, with tears in my eyes, “ I

did not know you thought so meanly of me ; why, I must be detestable, if that is a true picture of what I am."

" Dearest Agnes, I am sorry I have pained you ; I did not say it is a picture of what you are, only what you might have been, if, with your particular faults, you had been brought up as your cousins have been. Now do forgive me for having vexed you, and let me see your own bright face again. I can't tell you how often I longed to have you here, while you were away at school ; I cannot speak to any one as I can to you, and now in my extreme unreserve I have annoyed you."

" No, no ; it was silly of me to mind, because I have admitted all this to myself already. But I was surprised at your reading me so easily."

Ah ! Flora, how unkind you were to your unsophisticated cousin. You have put strange thoughts into her head. She is now repeating to herself Arthur's last words, and thinking they mean something more than a dear brother's words mean. This is what she says :—" Am I really so dear to him, that he longed to have me back again ? Why can he speak to me so openly ? And his voice was so sweet and earnest. I don't hear him speak like that to Ellen and Mary. Oh ! what am I thinking ? I feel quite bewildered ; I must try and drive away such

foolish, silly fancies ! How Arthur would despise me ! but it is all Flora's fault. I ought to have been grieved at my want of charity and love of approbation, but I *really* was only sorry that Arthur had discovered my fault."

Now, I have no doubt my young lady readers are putting me down as a weak, conceited girl. Perhaps I was. I cannot look into other people's hearts ; I only know my own ; and if Flora laid bare an ugly corner of it, I trust to their charity not to condemn me altogether if, on examination, they find a similar spot in their own. I could not forget Flora's words, but at the same time I could not summon up courage to treat Arthur less as a brother. It might be all imagination ; and why should I make myself wretched for a fancy ?

Arthur's birthday fell on one of the days in the last week of the holidays, and I was revolving in my mind what I should give him. Christmas gifts had nearly exhausted my pocket-money, and I did not like to ask my uncle for more. After puzzling myself a great deal about how the money was to be got, a bright idea occurred to me. I would write something, and send it to a magazine. At least I might expect a sovereign, perhaps two, and then I should be able to buy a beautiful print that I knew was a favourite of Arthur's. My heart beat with

excitement at the very possibility of success, but I hardly dared to hope. No time was to be lost ; I must begin at once. The promise that I had made not to write, except by Arthur's permission, was the first obstacle. There was no way of evading that difficulty, so I resolved to ask his permission boldly ; he could never guess why. My request surprised him a little.

“Ah! you faithless girl, what mischief are you up to? Are you going to continue that wonderful love tale?”

“Oh no. But, please, don't torture me with questions. I promise I will not be silly and waste my time. Now, don't shake your head. Can't you trust me?”

“Well, I'm not quite sure. I believe you won't write nonsense ; but if I give you *carte blanche* as to the amount of time to be spent, you will do little else. I will only consent on condition that you will restrict yourself to two hours in the day.”

“Very well. You are hard upon me, but I think I can agree to that.”

So difficulty Number 1 was overcome ; but my task was not easy. I found the two hours passed so quickly, and much of it was squandered in thinking what I had to say. At last I determined upon getting up an hour earlier, and thinking over my subject while the house was quiet, and there was nothing to distract my attention. How should I

manage this without disturbing Ellen, who was rather a light sleeper; and how could I wake myself?

The first time I put my new resolution into practice, I scarcely slept all night, from fear of oversleeping myself. Next morning I looked tired, and had a headache in consequence. My aunt insisted upon my not poring over my desk and making it worse, and so I lost my two precious hours that day. Evidently I must think of some other plan. I resolved to ask one of the servants to call me; but, unless she was questioned, not to divulge my secret. This succeeded very well—occasionally I had to parry sleepy questions from Ellen, as to what I was doing, sitting half-dressed in a room without a fire on a winter's morning; but I was always doing what she called wild, extraordinary things, and so now she added this to my other eccentricities. Some days, writing was hard uninteresting work, but my time was so limited that I could not afford to take a holiday. At last the manuscript was ready. I looked at it with loving eyes, and folded it into a neat parcel. I think the editors of the magazines must have smiled over my letters. I did not care how small the sum was, but I was in immediate want of the money, and should feel greatly indebted to them if, in the midst of their busy life, they would find one hour to read over my manuscript. It had taken a

long, long time to write, but was only too short and quickly read after all, and I trusted written so clearly, that they would have no difficulty in deciphering it. Unacquainted as I was with the manner in which I ought to address myself to such a work, I hoped they would forgive any informalities of style in this my letter, and kindly favour me with a speedy answer. I think that very "informality of style" was the secret of my success. To my great joy the editor returned a kind, encouraging letter, and the two dearly coveted pounds. How proud and delighted I felt, as I turned over in my hand the first money I had earned for myself!

CHAPTER VI.

SHORTLY after I had begun my work, my uncle had to leave home for a few days on business. He was a very neat, tidy person, and never liked to have his study disturbed. It was one of his crotchets, and nothing made him more angry than to find his books and papers had been meddled with. I really believe it would have been impossible for any one to have moved one of his documents half an inch, without his detecting the displacement. Perhaps I have already given my readers some idea that Charles was mischievously inclined ; at all events, he had an unlucky way of getting into scrapes,—more from thoughtlessness than anything else.

One day while my uncle was absent, he happened to want to refer to a valuable work on fishing which was in his father's sanctum. I heard him say to Ellen,—

“ It's all nonsense to tell me I must wait till papa comes home. What harm can I do in peeping into

the book for a few minutes? I won't even take it out of the study."

"Well, Charles," I said, "I warn you not to venture. Depend upon it uncle *will* find out you have been there, and I believe such untidy individuals as you and I, merely passing through the room, would disturb the exquisite order of the place. Very well, go—but mark my words, you'll repent it."

In this instance I was a true prophet. I thought Charles looked grave and in a fidget that evening; and at last the murder came out.

"Oh! Agnes, I wish I had taken your advice. I am the most ill-fated mortal! what do you think has happened? I found that 'Walton's Angler' was on one of the highest shelves; so to save myself the trouble of mounting a chair I made a spring to reach it, and so shook the shelf, that that beautiful little bust, which stands on the top, fell, and it is shivered to atoms. What on earth shall I do? Papa'll be so angry, and my pocket is empty. I shall never hear the last of it."

"Oh! don't say that;—but really, Charlie, what can I say to comfort you? I am so very, very sorry. I wish so much I could help you; but what is to be done? Have you picked up the pieces? Perhaps we could cement it."

“Impossible ;—the Portland vase case was a joke to this. There are a thousand pieces, so minute as to make it impossible to recognise what feature they belonged to.”

On examining the mangled remains, I was convinced how hopeless the task of mending the broken bust would be. I could not bear to think of Charlie’s distress and my uncle’s anger. The recollection of the two sovereigns broke upon my reverie. With this I could purchase a substitute for the unlucky victim of Charles’s awkwardness, and so shield him from his father’s anger. But Arthur was dearer to me than Charlie, and how could I give up my cherished project? The thought of his delight on receiving his favourite picture, had urged on my lazy thoughts many a time, when I had no inclination to write ; and now to have no worthy gift to offer would be too great a disappointment. Still I was not happy. Might I not present Arthur with the manuscript (I might truly say it was written for him), and devote the two sovereigns to replace the broken bust ?

After a long struggle with my unwillingness to relinquish my pet plan, I determined on acting up to this last idea. Reluctantly I wrote to one of my school friends in London, inclosing the cherished two pounds, and begging her to lay it out in the purchase of the bust, to be carefully packed and sent off to me

without delay. It was just in time. My uncle was to return the day after the parcel arrived. I had ordered it to be sent to the post-office, and called each day to inquire whether any box had come for me. At last it was smuggled into the house, unpacked, and I had placed it in safety on the spot lately occupied by its predecessor. I left the study door open, that Charles might see it as he passed (for since the day of the accident, he would not go into the study for anything). How I longed for him to come home, and feared that he might not chance to look up as he passed ! I could not rest till I knew whether my ruse would succeed.

At last I heard his voice, and listened breathlessly. Ellen was with him. I had stood the dining-room door ajar, and placed myself so as to see what happened. Charlie did not look up, and my heart began to sink. The letters were usually placed on the hall-table, which was just opposite the study. There was one for Ellen ; she took it up, and turning round to speak to Charlie, her eye caught sight of the bust.

“ Why, Charlie ! how was it you never told me you had found money to replace that broken bust ? You were so unhappy and yet actually forgot to relieve my mind about it. How very strange of you ! ”

“What can you mean, Ellen? Found money to replace the bust? Do explain yourself.”

“Why look there,” said Ellen, pointing to the object of my interest. Charlie stood with mouth and eyes open with amazement.

“I declare that’s magic and nothing else. How *did* that bust get there? Why it must be the ghost of the deceased bust that has been haunting me for the last five days.”

“A very substantial ghost at all events,” said Ellen laughing, “and most certainly placed there by mortal hands. Do you mean to say you know nothing about it?”

“I? Depend upon it, I should have been in far too great a state of happiness to have concealed it if I had. Ah! I see how it is; this is your doing, and you have been saying all this to blind me.”

“Honour bright; I am quite innocent of any such duplicity, and as much astonished as you are.”

“Well, this beats the ‘Arabian Nights’ hollow! I wish, whoever my good angel is, she could see how happy she has made me.”

“You are determined it is to be a lady. How do you know it is not Arthur?”

“Because I never told him.”

“But others may have done so. I have no doubt Agnes did.”

“Agnes? By the bye, do you think this can possibly be her doing? Now I verily believe it *is* she.”

“What nonsense, Charlie! Why you heard her say a fortnight ago that her purse was empty, and then she turned it out, and chuckled at the discovery of a miserable little four-penny piece, which she said would just buy her another quire of paper.”

“So she did. Well, I shall give up guessing; but I must find out. So good bye.”

And I heard him whistling merrily as he strode up-stairs, three steps at a time. Ellen followed at her own sedate pace, after shutting the study-door, and I was released from captivity with a light heart. I was so delighted, that Ellen said when she met me, “Why, Agnes, you look as if you had heard good news; who have you been talking to?”

“Nobody. Do I look happy?”

“Yes; and I will make you happier still.” And then she related the scene which I had just witnessed.

“Is it not extraordinary?” she asked.

“Indeed it is; but I’ll tell you what—whatever the good angel is, she has been very clever to accomplish her purpose so secretly and speedily.”

It was not difficult to mystify Ellen. She had been put so completely off her guard by hearing my confession of poverty, made before the arrival of the two sovereigns.

Charlie's suspicions began to revive, however, and in the evening he said to me, "Agnes, has any one been giving you money?"

"No. What makes you ask?"

"Why, because a most wonderful thing has happened;" and then, for the second time, I had to listen, and look unfeignedly astonished.

It was so amusing to hear his delighted comments!

"Isn't it first-rate? Here I have been torturing myself with the thought of the scene which would take place when papa came back; and now I am as jolly as a cricket!"

I drank in a deep draught of recompence the while, and got credit for being "no end of a sympathiser."

It was the custom at the Manor House to arrange the birthday presents on the plate of the honoured person at breakfast. I felt it would not do to place my manuscript with the rest, as I should have to endure all the comments made on my new sort of gift; so, ever since I made up my mind to buy the bust and give up the engraving, I had busied myself in working a handsome book-marker, to satisfy all queries as to what Agnes' present was.

I docketted it, "A small offering from a poor bankrupt." After giving this contribution to the

plateful, I retired to my own room, and drawing my manuscript from its place of concealment, wrapped it in a fresh cover, sealed it carefully and tidily, and then wrote a few lines, saying—"How that *this* was the result of the two hours' daily work, and a small tribute to my dear, kind, wise counsellor. I might say it was written for him, but the gift was not exactly in the form I originally intended it to wear. I hoped it would please him, and that he would have no reason to repent having given me leave to write what I wished."

This was placed on his dressing table, and secretly acknowledged in the morning by a warm squeeze of the hand, and a kind mischievous smile.

After all, he was not deprived of his favourite engraving, for there it actually lay on his plate, a present from Mary. The whole stratagem had succeeded to perfection, and I was very happy. I might have been defeated in my first plan, but no one would hit upon my second ; and Charlie had had his share into the bargain. When he saw the ticket on Arthur's marker, he exchanged a look with Ellen which was not lost upon me, and I chuckled inwardly at his increased mystification about the purchase of the bust. What fun it was !

I was not prepared for Arthur's delighted thanks. The first moment he found me alone, he came up

to me, and commenced such an eloquent harangue, that I could scarcely believe it was my quiet, grave Arthur, whose head was so turned with a few sheets of manuscript.

“I have not read it yet,” he said; “only peeped into it; but I cannot tell you how delighted I am with your kind pretty thought. And, still more at your persevering in the way you must have done, and worked often when you were disinclined. That’s the beauty of it!

“Why, Agnes, if you would only put your whole heart into everything as you did in this instance, what a noble character you would be!”

“Really, Arthur, you will turn your cousin’s head altogether, and undo all the good you have ever done her if you make one more pretty speech. For anything you know, it may be the greatest nonsense from beginning to end.”

“No, I don’t believe that; but even if it should be far inferior to what I expect it is, I shall still value it as the work of dear hands that have written with a willing loving heart. And now,” he said, “I have got a little surprise for you. Would you like a ride to-day?”

“A *ride*? Oh! I only wish it were possible; but a fortnight of my six months’ penance has yet to

expire, and then I shall be at school, and have to wait until Midsummer comes on."

"But I am commissioned by my father to relax the severity of the sentence, and on my birthday you are to have the treat of a good long ride. It is a glorious day, and if you won't laugh at my poor horsemanship, I shall be proud to wait upon your ladyship."

"Hurrah!" I said, clapping my hands. "How very charming! In five minutes I'll be ready!"

"Well, then, you must exercise patience for ten. I waited your orders, and now I will see them executed."

I stood waiting in the hall before five minutes had elapsed. At last the pony came in sight.

"Oh, how stupid of the groom! he has put a gentleman's saddle on, and now more time will be wasted. Do make haste," I said, turning to the man; but while I spoke, behold Sir Bedivere, with my saddle and bridle, led by my uncle.

I looked at him with wondering eyes. "Well, Agnes," he said, smiling, "are you willing to risk your neck again to this impetuous animal's custody?"

"You don't mean to say I may actually have a ride on Sir Bedivere? Are you in earnest? Will you trust me?"

“ Yes and no,” he answered. “ Yes—as he is *now*, thoroughly trained to be a lady’s horse, and perfectly safe for my wild niece. No—as he *was*—an unbroken colt when she mounted him, without consulting my wishes.”

“ Really, uncle, I don’t know how to thank you. But I am so grateful,—you could not have given me a greater treat. Now, do mount me, and we will start at once.”

And Sir Bedivere behaved to perfection ; shied at nothing, kicked at nothing ; never once even hinted at running away. My only regret was that he had become so perfectly quiet,—I would rather he had given me a little trouble ; but I was too gratified at my promotion from riding the wee shaggy pony to make any rash remarks ; and I felt my uncle had heaped coals of fire on my head.

And now school-time had come round again. Mixed with my regret at leaving home, was the looking forward to seeing Miss Harley and my schoolfellows ; and the six weeks’ rest from work made me keen for the old excitement of striving for the first prize.

People find fault with this spirit of emulation, and the system of prizes that gives rise to it. Doubtless it is apt to raise selfish and ungenerous emotions in our hearts, unless we watch our motives with a

jealous eye. But, after all, is not a right ambition encouraged and insisted on in that race which all Christians must run? Ah! if we could only strive as earnestly for that prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus, as we do for the paltry distinctions which this world offers, it would be well for us.

CHAPTER VII.

ON my return to school, when greetings and kissings were all over (embracing twenty-four individuals, all of whom insist upon three or four kisses apiece, is no small undertaking!), Miss Harley said, "Agnes, here is a new schoolfellow for you. An Indian child like yourself. She is to share your room, and I hope you will be good friends."

Now I must say a few words about my new friend. The first true girlish friendship I ever formed was for May Sherwood—a friendship which has ripened and strengthened, until I no longer feel as if I needed a sister. Our lots through life have been much cast together, and so the tie of common interests has been added to the bond of common tastes and feelings. They say that we generally choose a friend whose character is a contrast to our own, but May Sherwood and I were singularly alike in some things. Both enthusiastic, quick-tempered, and somewhat romantic; independent, and perhaps a little

brusque and over candid. But in her there was a fund of unselfishness which seemed inexhaustible, and she was the truest sympathiser I have ever known. In these good points she differed from me. We were almost the same age. Being both unreserved, we were not long in knowing each other; besides, my father and hers were old friends, and May had a tradition that in our baby days we had been playfellows. This knotty point, however, we agreed must be decided by a reference to India. Little by little I became acquainted with May's history. Her life had not been so peaceful and happy as mine. There were no kind aunts or uncles who could receive her when the time for separation from her parents came. So she had always felt a little outcast; not that she was unkindly treated. Sometimes, indeed, she had been spoiled and petted. Sent from one place to another; here for her health, and there for her education; at one time isolated in a large family of children; excellent people recommended by an interfering old lady who knew nothing about the management of children; and then, when it was found that this "home" would not suit, packed off somewhere else and given into the custody of a severe maiden lady who looked upon May's high spirits as sinful, and could make no allowance for childish weaknesses. Poor May! Alternately

petted and harshly treated,—allowed to run wild, and kept in with a tight hand ; ever longing for her parents' love, and to feel that she really belonged to some one, instead of being tacked on to strangers, who only cared for her board money,—it was sad, sad, sad ! How many Indian children are thus cast like orphans on English society, and grow up strangers to their parents, and to the gentle influences of domestic love ! If May had been a timid, melancholy child, she would have grown up into a moody, peevish woman. But what was worst of all, she said, was associating with vulgar people. “ I am sure papa and mamma would have broken their hearts if they had known what funny people I have been with. And then all I did say and hint at in my letters, was counteracted by my guardians, who of course were supposed to be better judges than I was, and who never took the trouble to investigate matters for themselves.”

I felt how much I had to thank God for when I looked back upon my happy childhood at the Manor House.

“ Never mind, dear May ; you will be happy here, and we will all try to make you forget your ‘ vagabonda ’ life. You must be my sister. I know we shall suit each other capitally. I want a girl friend—for I never could make *confidantes* of Mary or Ellen. Wouldn’t it be fun if we went out to

India together, and saw a great deal of each other there?"

And May answered with her bright twinkling smile, which shone through her tearful eyes,—she was easily moved to tears, and I used often to tease her about not having them under better control.

"Well, I have always hitherto been puzzled how to answer, when asked, 'Where is your home?' My impulse was to say, 'I don't know,' or 'Nowhere,' but I see no reason why I should not have my home in India; and from this day I will console myself with the thought that I must not expect a home in England, while those I love best are in the far East. Dear me," she went on with a comical gravity, "I never thought of it before, but I wonder if I am an exile; I certainly am banished from my home."

"For your good though, not for your punishment."

"I know people say that, Agnes; but after all, I feel I should have grown up a much more loveable and better girl, if I had been with my own father and mother."

"But they would have had the pain of seeing you become every year paler and more fragile. I shall never forget the impression made on my mind by a girl of fifteen, who had just arrived from India. I think her parents had been too poor to send her home to be educated. In the first place she talked such curious English, with a nasal twang that was

dreadful to hear, and her manners were so unformed and odd. Somehow she didn't seem English in anything, and if not positively untruthful, she had such a misty inaccurate way of stating facts, that I could not believe what she said. What was worst of all, was a want of refinement and delicacy in her ideas. My uncle said it was all owing to being brought up in India, and often left to the charge of native servants. It is better to suffer any amount of separation than to grow up in such an atmosphere of untruthfulness."

May and I often had opportunities of talking together. Miss Harley never expected us to speak French, either when we were out walking, or in our bedrooms. This showed her wisdom. It allowed us thoroughly to enjoy our leisure time, and relieve our minds (as girls must do) in chattering, without breaking rules. The French that is talked by compulsion, when no mistress is at hand, is almost invariably such a horrible jargon as no native of France could understand, and certainly does not tend to improve our knowledge of that language. The only object the girls have in view is, with reckless disregard of gender and idiom, to make the gibberish as amusing as possible, as for instance,—

“Mon chandelle est snouffé detrors. J'ai un froid dans la tête,” etc.

I have heard school girls boast of their ingenuity in talking bad French.

But this is a digression. The smooth current of my school life was disturbed by the receipt of a home letter, which ran as follows (it was from my aunt) :—

“ DEAREST AGNES,

“ I THINK it right to tell you that we are in great anxiety about our dear Arthur. He has ruptured a blood-vessel on the lungs, and though the immediate danger has passed, he is much reduced, and the doctor warns us that the greatest care is necessary to prevent a recurrence of the terrible symptom. Don’t fret yourself with the idea that we shall hide the truth from you. I promise to be quite candid. We can only pray that God may see fit to spare our precious son ; I know you will sympathise deeply, and indeed make the sorrow your own, for he has always been a brother to you. The cloud of anxiety has come at last,—the shadow to make our happy home grave. Do you remember our conversation that day of the pic-nic, last summer ? Arthur has just given me this note to inclose to you. It is like his affectionate thoughtful self to write.

“ Ever your very affectionate AUNT.”

Arthur's Note.

“ MY OWN DEAR AGNES,

“ SEE I am not so very bad, for my hand is as steady as ever; but I know a loving little heart that will be thrown into a great state of agitation by the news of my illness, and I want to comfort it. Dear Agnes, I ask you for my sake, not to allow your anxiety to make you fretful and impatient at being obliged to be at work, and away from home. I want you to be able to tell me when you come back, ‘ I asked God to help me to overcome myself, and so I was enabled to go on steadily without giving way.’ Will you do this for me?

“ Yours most affectionately,

“ ARTHUR.”

Oh, how difficult it was!—the news had come so suddenly, no wonder my heart sank. A strange presentiment of coming sorrow seized upon me. Cheerful accounts came daily of his gradual improvement, but I only shook my head when Miss Harley and May tried to make me hope. Arthur had led me to the true path of duty, and I would not let Miss Harley excuse me my lessons, though my mind often wandered from the subject of my studies to picture imaginary scenes of Arthur ill, or dying, and

the tears would make the lines on the page swim, run into each other, and finally become a watery haze. But I felt constant work was the best medicine. I was twice as wretched if I was idle for ten minutes, and so the half year came to an end, and I received not only the first prize, but loving words of praise from Miss Harley.

“ You have still many faults to conquer, dear Agnes ; what has given me so much pleasure has not been complete success, but the sight of your earnest endeavours to overcome those faults. I never looked for sudden perfection.”

It was some comfort to think of taking back this report to Arthur ; and though I was not so much delighted at receiving the first prize as I should have been last half-year, I was glad to think Miss Harley’s watchful experienced eye had detected improvement.

I was half afraid of seeing Arthur again, but I had never rightly realized how changed he might be. He was sitting in an easy chair in the drawing-room when I went in, and at a glance I saw the difference. His step was firm when he came to meet me ; but, oh ! those bright, bright eyes, and that hectic colour. I could not speak, for I felt my voice would tremble and betray me, and that the tears would come ; so I only pressed the burning hand with a nervous grasp.

‘For the first time in my life I was thankful for one of Mary’s common-places, as it gave me time to recover myself.

“Wouldn’t you like luncheon, Agnes? You look tired, and I suppose you have had nothing since breakfast. Will you have a mutton chop, or only bread and butter, and wine, as we shall dine at five?”

“Oh, anything you like, I’m not hungry; at least,” I said nervously, “it’s very kind of you,—bread and butter, please, and a glass of water.”

This very incoherent speech made her open her eyes; but Arthur came to the rescue, and said,

“Take my advice and go and take off your things first, while they are cutting the bread and butter; and make haste, for I want to know all about the prizes.”

I was thankful to go up to my own room. Ellen went with me, but I could restrain my feelings no longer, and burst into a flood of tears.

“Dear Agnes, what is the matter?” she asked kindly; so softly I could hardly believe it was Ellen’s voice.

“Oh! he is so changed, I’m sure he is dying. What shall I do?”

She only sat silent, holding my hand, and stroking it gently; judging rightly that it was better to let the

tears expend themselves. When I was calm again, she said, "I am grieved to hear you say you think him so changed; watching the dear face day by day, we could not see it, and I was very anxious to know how he would strike you as looking. I have felt less hopeful than mamma and Mary have, but I did not like to speak all my gloomy fears. You must try and be cheerful, for Arthur's sake. I know you will find it very difficult, but promise me to make the effort."

"Indeed I will; but I am much better now, and I have been very selfish only to think of my own grief, when yours must be so great."

The sad, strong fellowship of sorrow was drawing me to Ellen, and making me love her as I had never done in happy days. And so it is that the comfort of earthly sympathy, sometimes from unexpected sources, is sent to soothe us when we most need it, and often forms the foundation of a lasting affection; breaking down all the small barriers of misunderstanding and uncongeniality, which before we thought insurmountable.

It was many days before Arthur alluded to his sickness; and he always seemed so cheerful, and really revived in health under the kindly influence of the warm, soft, June air, that I began at last to think I had alarmed myself unnecessarily. My eye became

accustomed to his delicacy of appearance, and it was but natural that we should all allow ourselves to breathe freely. Only Ellen still looked anxious. Her disposition was wanting in hopefulness, and her spirits did not easily recover their elasticity. It often seemed to me that every little care left a small furrow on her mind, as it were, and yet she was always so calm and patient. I tried to think kindly about Mary, but I could not argue myself out of the belief that she was almost unfeeling.

No one could be more attentive to Arthur than she was; indeed her very want of demonstrativeness fitted her admirably for the office of nurse. She piqued herself upon this stoicism, and that aggravated me; it seemed so conceited.

I can't forget the matter-of-fact way she detailed to me all the particulars of Arthur's illness. It was too exasperating.

"Well, Mary, I wonder you are not ashamed of being so hard-hearted. I really believe nothing would please you better than to be present at an operation, and display your fortitude in never wincing at the agony of the patient. I can see nothing to admire in that sort of thing. Now—that has been on my mind for a long time, and I have got rid of it at last."

Mary's only reply was a look of blank astonish-

ment ; she was unaccustomed to rebuke, and it had become so natural to her to feel herself indispensable in the house, and to hear every one praise her usefulness and amiability, that she had settled down into a state of perfect self-satisfaction, which she did not recognise as vanity, because no one had ever dreamt of accusing her of such a fault. These placid people are doubtless of great use in the world, and there are times when we feel how necessary they are ; they fill up the interstices of society in a comfortable sort of way, and prevent the other particles from chafing too much against each other ; perhaps it is because they make our impetuosity and want of composure so conspicuous, that we dislike them.

There are very few who are a happy medium between these extremes. My aunt was one of those few. Generally very composed and gentle ; yet I have seen all the warmth of her heart revealed in an unguarded moment, and I have cherished the remembrance of those flashes to bring up to my memory, when (as at times was the case) she appeared as cold as Mary. When she first saw me after Arthur's illness, she put her arms round me and sobbed, and on many occasions I have seen her quiet temper roused at the sight of unkindness or injustice. She was quite severe upon some faults ; nothing made her dislike a person more than vanity about dress

and appearance, and extravagance in these matters. I did not often offend her on this point, but when I did express a wish for a piece of finery, I met with no encouragement. All these little peculiarities combine to form those wonderful shades and differences of character which constitute one of the most interesting features of human history. And as it is in character, so in everything which God has created ; the mind is never wearied with monotony. The endless varieties of form and colour, depth and tone, are given to delight and refresh the heart of man, and intended to elevate his soul in gratitude to the Sovereign Maker of all. No taste is left ungratified ; there is something for each, and minds are formed for the enjoyment of every one of God's gifts, so that nothing may be profitless.

CHAPTER VIII.

“WILL you come and read to me, Agnes?” said Arthur, one Sunday evening. “My head is aching rather, and I want something to soothe me.”

“Oh yes; I shall be delighted to do so. What book should you like?”

“Well, bring me my Keble and the Bible. We will begin with the hymn for to-day, and then we will have a chapter.”

When I had fetched the books, we settled ourselves comfortably in one of the large bay windows. The soft summer twilight was all in keeping with the spirit of Keble’s poetry. I read the verses, and paused, but Arthur repeated again—

“ Yet, weary heart,
Thou need’st not in thy gloom depart,
Nor fainting turn to seek thy distant home;
Sweetly thy sickening throbs are eyed
By the kind Saviour at thy side.”

“Do you know it, Arthur?” I asked.

“Oh yes, by heart;—but I wanted to talk it over

with you. I don't think we ever rightly enjoy a hymn we have not heard before. When the words have come home to us, and we have repeated and repeated them when they suited our case ; we learn to appreciate their beauty, and feel grateful to those who wrote them. Have you never noticed how a text of Scripture which you have often read heedlessly, has struck you with a force and a beauty you had not seen before, until you happened to want just that very verse ? ”

“ Yes ; I think I have, but not often.”

“ Lately I have constantly experienced this. I almost feel inclined to say, ‘ Why, this passage must have been written almost expressly for me.’ To my mind, in this lies one of the strongest proofs of the divine inspiration of Scripture. There is no case of difficulty, doubt, or distress, which has not its remedy in the Word of God. But, to return to Keble. This verse has so often occurred to me lately. I have to struggle much against that longing for my distant home. I have always felt that it was not in me to render great or zealous service. Looking forward to what I might do as God’s minister, I quite trembled at the prospect of my future short-comings ; and now I am thankful that I am to be called away from the battle-field, before I grow faint with the strife.”

“Please, dear Arthur, don’t speak so—you make my heart sink. I *must* hope you are to live, and not die. I am sure you are stronger than you were; and you are so cheerful, I cannot believe you are as ill as you think.”

“No, Agnes; I shall not live,” he said, very gravely. “Don’t allow any one to make you think otherwise. I want to prepare you for this myself now,—that you may have time to accustom yourself to the thought, ‘Arthur is going to leave us.’ Don’t cry, my dearest; you will grieve me sadly. It is no sorrow to me to think of going home. I have never been strong enough to enjoy life as the young do. Mine has been, thank God! a quiet, peaceful life, rendered bright by love and sympathy. But I would rather not stay long here. I look forward to meeting the same dear ones in a better land. I may not have an opportunity of speaking to you again as I have done to-day, and it has been on my mind since you returned from school to tell you this. I have deferred it from day to day, shrinking from the task of giving you pain.—Now read me the 5th chapter of the 2nd Corinthians.”

The sweet, solemn words sank like a cordial into my heart, and, as I read them, my sobs ceased.

“I am a poor, weak, selfish sister, Arthur, to wish to keep you away from home, just to be a joy and

comfort to me. But, oh ! how can I say good-bye to you with a cheerful heart ? How can I be willing to part, without a certainty that we shall meet again ? I know all things are possible with God, and that His grace is sufficient for me ; if I could only feel that I loved aright, and sought Him with my whole heart. I sometimes think if I do reach the home you are going to, at all, it will be like Astathes, the poor waverer—just as the sun goes down. Give me a bright comforting text, to keep my heart up when I am tempted to despair."

"Here is one :—‘ Fear not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.’ ”

"Agnes," said Arthur to me one day, "Uly is getting ill for want of exercise. He won't go out without me. Will you have patience with him, and try and coax him to follow you ? ”

"Come here, Uly," he said, calling the dog to him. "Go out, good dog."

This order was generally his master's severest punishment ; so Uly drooped his head, and began slowly to obey.

"I'm not angry, Uly—good dog ; go with Agnes ; " and he patted him kindly on the head. The dog wagged his tail in a timid, uncertain manner, evidently

sorely puzzled. He followed me, however, but with unwilling, lagging steps, and all my fondest epithets could not cheer him.

When we returned, Arthur soon made him understand he had done the thing he wished him to do ; and from that day Uly followed me in my walks.

“ I’m afraid it’s very foolish of me to care so much about an animal,” said Arthur ; “ but I should be sorry if he were to get ill. Poor faithful Uly ! If anything happens to me, remember he is yours. You will be kind to him, I know.”

I need not say I gave my promise.

As I was to leave home again very soon, Mary gave up her post of nurse to me ; not that Arthur needed much help, but I begged to be allowed to give that little. He never spoke to me again of death. It must have been because he did not want to make me think gloomily of it. Charlie pleased me very much by his thoughtfulness. He was much attached to Arthur, who had always been so good an elder brother to him. He said to me one day,

“ Do you think him very ill, Agnes ? ”

“ Yes, Charlie, very ill.”

“ But he is so cheerful ! Why, if I thought I was going to die, I could’nt be like that ; but then he is so good, and I am such a wild careless fellow. I wonder why good people are not always allowed to

live long, they would make the world better than it is perhaps."

"I have often wondered at that too. It must be, I think, because God is merciful to all; the good are taken to be made quite happy, and the bad are given time and opportunity for repentance; but all good men, Charlie, do not die early."

"No, of course not. Still one has a sort of idea that when a fellow is very religious he won't live long,—there are so few of them, though. It's not often you see a woman who has not some amount of goodness in her; but unless a man is a delicate chap, or has something to make him down in the mouth, it seems to me that he seldom thinks about another world."

"Oh! Charlie, I don't agree with you there. Women keep up more of an outward show of religion, because, however bad and thoughtless a man may be, he likes religion in a woman; but I doubt whether that outward show, which is kept up for appearance sake, is of any good at all; I don't believe women are one bit more religious *at heart* than men are. And then again, men keep their serious thoughts so much to themselves, that it is next to impossible to know what they really are. *We* never hear profane talking, and are never thrown into irreligious society, otherwise we should be just as bad and thoughtless

as young men are. Our minds are stuffed with love of admiration and dress ; lace, flowers, flounces, and a thousand nonsensical things ; and there is as little room left for good thoughts as if the space was filled by anything more actually wrong. I, for one, should be ashamed to speak aloud all the silly nothings that occupy my idle minutes."

"Well, of course, I am no judge of that ; but I should be sorry to think that Mamma, and Mary, and Ellen, for instance, were not religious ; why, in that case, they must be hypocrites, and that's worse than all."

"No, no, I didn't mean that ; of course there are a great many exceptions, and I am sure aunt is one of them, but there are exceptions to every rule you know."

"Don't run away just yet, Agnes. I want you to give me a straight forward answer to a straight forward question."

"Am I not in the habit of doing that ? What can it be that makes you so anxious to get at the truth ?"

"Well, it's apropos to nothing that we have been talking about, but it's just come into my mind to ask you, and I'm afraid that I shall forget again. Had you anything to say to the replacing of the broken bust ?"

I felt myself colour up, for the question was so

unexpected. "What ever put such an idea into your head?"

"Never mind; say yes or no," and he looked hard at me. "Oh! now I am right, it was you—confess."

"Its very unfair to drive me into such a corner, for I cannot tell a story about it."

"No, no, lady fair, you are not going yet; tell me how you got the money for it. Remember you confessed to having none, just about the time of the accident."

"Which was true, honour bright!"

"Then somebody gave you the £2!"

"Really, Charlie, you are very impertinent to cross-question me so."

"Perhaps I am, but I must know."

"Talk about a woman's curiosity, why it's nothing to yours!"

"It's no go," he said, laughing; "you won't shame me out of my determination to know. I shall apply the system of torture in a minute," and he gave my wrist the old schoolboy grip, which was not to be resisted, and so, inch by inch, he unrolled the history of my little plot.

"Oh, Agnes, I really am ashamed of myself—will you forgive me?"

"What for?"

"Why for chaffing you so cruelly about your

literary mania ; and to think of your turning your sheets of manuscript into guineas for me. What a brick you are ! ”

“ That’s a pretty compliment to pay me.”

“ Well, I’m not up to the dodge of making pretty speeches, but I declare you’re a stunning old woman, and no mistake ; and I’m a horrid ungrateful fellow for ever having bothered you in the way I did.”

“ Don’t distress yourself about that : I assure you I got all the thanks I wanted as I stood in the dining room, listening to your exclamations when you discovered the new bust in uncle’s study.”

“ Well, it’s as good as a play ; and now,” he said, giving me a hearty kiss, “ I’ll let you off.”

CHAPTER IX.

I THOUGHT I had heard the last of the story ; but some days afterwards Arthur said to me, " Charlie has been telling me all about the bust, Agnes. I shall prize my present more than ever now. How well you kept your secret, even from me," he added smiling. " I shall begin to think you quite skilful at concealment. I should have thought your face alone would have betrayed some part of it."

" I hope Charlie won't tell the tale to every one."

" Oh no, he promised me it should go no further ; I think I had a right to know."

" Why, Arthur ?"

" I can't exactly say why, except that you seem to be so much mine, that I expect to have it acknowledged," and his voice trembled as he went on. " This has been since the day when your dear mother put you into my arms. I was a boy then, and you were a very little thing ; you looked at me with your blue eyes, a little frightened at first, but you soon seemed

to find out that you might trust me, for you stroked my face with your tiny hand and called me 'dear Artie' in your baby way. Since that day, Agnes, I have looked upon you as a precious loan."

The tears gathered in his eyes and he took my hand. There was silence for a few minutes ; some strong emotion seemed to shake Arthur's feeble frame, for his breathing was quick and laboured, and now and then I fancied I heard a suppressed sob. Suddenly he started up, and spoke in a calm steady voice.

" Agnes, my darling, I must say good bye ; for I shall not see you again before you go to school, perhaps——" he checked himself, but I knew what he was thinking of, as he gazed long and earnestly into my face ; a far-off gaze, as if striving to look beyond the present into the future—that land where partings are unknown. His voice did not falter as he said,—

" ' Beloved, building up yourself on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourself in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life ; ' and now I commend you to ' Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before His presence.' "

The effort had been too much for the feeble frame. When the words were ended, a violent fit of coughing brought back the fatal symptom. I rang the bell violently for assistance. It was so fearful to see that

crimson tide of life blood. Succour soon came ; kind hands to soothe, and loving hearts to suggest remedies. Ah ! how little could they do when the last hour came ; how quickly the small bar of vitality was breaking down and melting away ! In a very short time all was to be over, and the sweet spirit at rest. We laid him on the couch, and sat round in silence, conscious of a great "shadow watching over all."

Arthur had fainted from exhaustion, and we feared that he was to pass away without another sign of intelligence ; but the mild eyes opened again, and then he pointed to the volume which was now constantly beside him. His mother opened it at that chapter of the Revelations which gives a description of heaven. How bright his smile was ! that was comfort enough to stay his thoughts upon. When he had recovered sufficient strength to speak, he said—

"I fear no evil, for He is with me." And thus we sat waiting till midnight, when the messenger came to summon him. There was no struggle, no convulsion. We could scarcely name the moment in which the soul had passed into eternity. There was a slight stir in the room, for my aunt had become conscious that her hand was pressed by no living grasp. He who but a few hours before had been speaking and walking with us—where was he ?

We all felt that the presence of the dead was too solemn and awful for vehement grief. What could our poor cries and tears avail? We might go to him, but he could never, never return to us. And now we must go back to the busy world without him—the busy, heartless world! From weariness and weeping I soon fell asleep, and then in the morning came that terrible wakening, which all who have known grief must have experienced. A dull heavy weight at the heart, and the returning consciousness of what has caused the weight. How changed everything looked! My own face startled me, it was so white and tearful; the sunshine looked sad. A knot of children were laughing and talking on the chase; quite unaware, poor little things, how harsh their merry laughter sounded. At last one of them looked up and pointed to the blank windows; they were all grave for a moment, and then returned to their game. My eye next rested on a little book. I opened it absently. It was my "Christian Year;" we had often read it together. I kissed the book, and then burst into tears. Why linger over the remembrance of those sad, sad days? It is an oft-told tale. "Oh! heart, how fares it with thee now? Something it is which thou hast lost, some pleasure from thine early years."

While I was dressing, I heard a low plaintive whining, which I recognised to be Uly's voice.

Hastening in the direction from which it came, I found the poor dog seated at his master's door. The hour when he was usually admitted had passed, and he could not rest. I sat down by him, and tried to soothe him, but in vain. That piteous howl sounded so mournful, so heart-broken, I could not bear to listen to it. I only felt it must be stopped. Taking the poor animal in my arms, I went to Charlie's room.

"Charlie, you must send Uly away. I found him howling outside dear Arthur's door, and the sound will break my heart. What shall we do? You know Arthur gave him to me, and I cannot lose sight of him."

Charlie thought a minute, and then said,—

"I will take him to the gardener's house, and you must go there to him and give him his dinner."

"Oh, I will take him myself. He knows me better than any one now."

We did not bring him back to the house till the funeral was over; and then the little creature rushed straight up to the old door. It was so sad to see his dumb grief. The poor people in the village told me afterwards, that he had sought his master in every cottage; entering with an eager anxious look, and then leaving, with drooping head, when disappointed of finding the object of his search. Uly's trials did

not last long. Gradually he pined away; he would scarcely taste his food, and often sat looking at me with his large brown eyes full of tears. I could scarcely wish him to live, for he was so utterly wretched. One morning I missed him, and after searching long I found him in Arthur's room. He had crawled there to die. I tried to raise him, but he made a faint resistance; and under his head lay his master's slipper, and he was afraid I should take it from him. I need not say I let him lie in peace until the devoted little heart had ceased to beat. How strange that we could live on without Arthur, while this unreasoning soul-less creature had died of grief! I have anticipated Uly's fate, and now I must go back to that sad morning. I think we all dreaded the meeting again at breakfast. It was a silent meal; we could only think of one subject, and *that* we could not trust ourselves to mention. After it was over the bell was rung for prayers. Since his ordination Arthur had acted as priest of the household. He read prayers yesterday, and now the chair is vacant. My poor uncle wished to resume the duty calmly, but his voice was broken by sobs, and we were relieved when the painful task was over.

“I felt,” he said, “it was better to begin at once; time would not have made it easier.”

He begged me to come into the study to receive Arthur's little gifts. They had evidently been planned some months before, when he was first taken ill. There was something for each of us, put up and directed by himself. When we were leaving the room he called me back.

“Agnes, my child, this is for you. Arthur left a note and this money, which he wishes you to use your own discretion in dividing amongst his poor people;” he paused, and then added, almost in a whisper, “you will be doubly dear to his mother and myself for the love he bore you.”

I was inexpressibly touched at finding I had been singled out to execute his last wishes. Was it not done to give me some interesting and new occupation, to wile away the first weary days of grief? On the day of the funeral we felt we were losing the last relic of him we loved—the poor forsaken body; the “garment by the soul laid by, and precious only to ourselves.” There was such a sweet calm smile on his cold face, conveying an idea of such perfect rest, as he lay in his coffin with white roses scattered round him, and the thin transparent hands crossed on his breast. The gentle holy beauty of his mind had left a trace on the still features, but beyond that, there was a beauty, an insensibility to all our grief which seemed to put a great distance

between us and the dead, and rebuke us for mourning our loss which had been such gain to him. He was laid beneath a large yew tree close to the church, in which he had so often offered up his prayers and praises.

It was very hard, at first, going back to the dry routine of every-day life with such a sore heart. I was roused by the thought of having Arthur's work to do; and begged my aunt to give me leave to remain at home till that was done, after which I wished to return to school. I had to consult Mary about the laying out of Arthur's legacy; for though I had sometimes gone with him to the cottages, I was not a regular district visitor, and felt somewhat anxious and nervous at my new employment. I had many a trial of temper in putting up with Mary's patronizing manner. I think she was a little hurt about not having the management herself, but, of course, she could not give utterance to her thoughts. It was very painful to have no sympathy in what was to me a sacred duty, and I blushed to think that I should lose my self-control in the performance of it. If Mary had shown one ray of softness, I should not have found it so difficult to bear with her. I will record one conversation which passed between us.

“Can you spare me a quarter of an hour, Mary?”

"If you particularly want me, I must; but I wish to be at the school by eleven."

"I won't keep you long; but I am anxious to complete my list of poor people, and there is one family whose name I can't recollect; they live in a lane at the further end of the village; near where the poor boy who broke his leg last winter lives."

"I know who you mean, the Martins; they are good-for-nothing people, and I hope you're not going to put their names down."

"Yes—I think I ought; you know dear Arthur was very much interested in them."

"I know he was; but he was quite taken in. The husband drinks dreadfully; and what is the use of giving money to a man who spends it in that way?"

"But I am not going to give money to any one: my intention is to lay the whole of it out either in buying necessaries or in paying rent. That was always *his* plan, you know, and I wish to follow it. I remember his particularly mentioning Mrs. Martin as being a very worthy object of charity. Why should the sins of the worthless husband be visited upon the innocent wife?"

"Oh! I don't wish to argue the point, Agnes—I am not clever at that; but I think I have had a little more experience in these matters than you have, and simply wished to give advice."

“Please, Mary, don’t be so hard upon me. I don’t want to get angry, but that stiff dry manner of yours is enough to provoke any one.”

“What in the world have I said to make you angry? You are the most extraordinary girl I ever saw. If I am so provoking, why don’t you go to some one else for advice? Is there anything else you want me to tell you?”

“Nothing, thank you,” I answered quickly, and so Mary left me to my own wretched thoughts. Was this the way Arthur expected me to fulfil his dying wishes? This the temper of mind in harmony with the solemn death-bed scene I had lately witnessed? What should I do? Oh! my rebellious angry heart, so soon untrue to its resolutions. Why was it? Had I forgotten to look upwards for help? was it to be ever thus with me—resentful of the least rebuke—impatient? Arthur, Arthur, you have left me, and papa is far away, while I am yearning for one word of love and encouragement. I can’t lose sight of self for one moment. Yes, Arthur, my more than brother, you were right when you said how much sorrow I should meet to bring my spirit low. These passionate thoughts were rushing through my mind, the paper was lying unheeded and blotted with tears before me, and I was forgetful of all but my own miserable reflections,

when I felt a hand on my shoulder and a cheery voice :—

“ Halloo ! Agnes,—what’s the matter ? ” Charlie said kindly, as he looked at my red eyes.

“ I am very, very wretched. I want Arthur—no one can fill his place to me.”

“ No, I am afraid not; certainly not such a rough blundering fellow as I am : but see, here is an Indian letter for you.”

“ Well, that is the best comfort, Charlie ; how strange that it should arrive just at this moment ! ”

CHAPTER X.

MY father's letters were always full of tenderness; he possessed the rare talent of writing as if he were speaking; and another talent, perhaps less common, of suiting his letters to the capacity of the tenderest age. With wonderful tact he had kept pace with his child's mind; gradually, very gradually, the tone had deepened and sobered, until the pretty simple chatty recital of every-day trifles, had given place to the interchange of thoughts and feelings, such as most men would consider quite beyond the understanding of a girl of seventeen; but papa's letters had ever been most precious. He had such a winning way of mixing advice and grave reflection, with lively, sparkling ingredients. The language was so pure and well chosen, without conveying any impression of being studied, that every sentence carried a weight and emphasis of its own. The portfolio containing all the dear letters was well worn, and some of those which had lain longest in it bore marks of being often fingered by a little hand that was not always gentle

in its dealing. Now I will let my readers peep over my shoulder, that they may judge for themselves of the merit of the letter. It was dated from the place which had been his home in happy days, when his beloved wife and child were with him.

“MY PRECIOUS CHILD,

“MY spirits have been rather depressed in passing through this scene of earlier days. It is melancholy to be alone where you have rejoiced with others. It is distressing to meet strangers where wife and child and beloved friends used to crowd around one ; it is depressing to see how much of one’s public work has been left undone, and how much more zeal, and energy, and successful effort might have been brought to the task. Home, too ! Here was my home once, shattered and gone, never more to be found in its integrity on earth ; and yet I am ashamed of such thoughts, with so many mercies still left. Such a beloved child to work for, how can I repine ? Nor do I. Humbly and thankfully I would resume my way, and strive to do my duty to the best of my ability, and more especially that best and sweetest of duties to be a real father to my motherless child. When I was last here you were a thing to be danced on the knee, and carried in the arms, and tossed up high ; and now I am looking forward to seeing that same Agnes

again, if it be God's holy will to grant me that joy. She will be a woman then ; with high and holy duties, and a matured judgment. Dare I take up my pen, or lay it down again, without one effort, however feeble, to reach the spring of love, and affection, and sympathy which I know and feel to exist in a daughter's heart? And shall I fail to waken in my own soul all the feelings which such sweet communings excite? It makes my heart beat quicker to think that, perhaps in little more than a year, I shall exchange those scanty meagre out-pourings of my heart for the full free medium of personal intercourse. Sometimes I wonder whether my merry light-hearted child will find this grave life dull? It is monotonous enough ; and yet to me monotony is not the word. It has to me its striving topics—its engrossing occupations—its anxious apprehensions—its happy triumphs ; but they are such as my Agnes can scarcely share. They are enjoyed in my study-chair before my desk, and constitute, as it were, an inner life, of which there is little outward demonstration. Deeper even than this inner life lies that spiritual existence—that great warfare of the soul, in which my child can be my fellow-worker—aye, and my helper. I may suppose her, by her own bright example, to point to higher duties, stimulate to nobler efforts, hesitate at no self-sacrifice. Oh ! my child, women

such as these make heroes of men! Am I cold hearted? am I foolish? because I place such a standard before my own darling daughter; because I bid her subdue all that is selfish in her earthly affections; and make them all subservient to the aim of winning the souls of those she loves to Christ? to be content to be a secondary object so long as she makes father, brother, husband, friend, the servant of her God? Is this a very rambling letter? I like to spend one hour of my quiet Sunday with you: it refreshes and seems to bring me near you while I write. Accept all the love my poor pen can convey."

Was not this a sweet drop of comfort? I felt alone and miserable before I read those words, and they have roused me from my morbid impatience with myself. I long to prove myself a worthy daughter of such a father; but never, never can I hope to attain that beautiful perfection of character. Why not? Let me at least take one step. Brush away these useless tears, and pray for that help which is omnipotent. Now dear letter, take your place in the little case, and let me put you away in my drawer of treasures. I am afraid it is a very untidy drawer, but I have no time to put it to rights now. Papa says, women, such as he holds up to my imitation, make heroes of men; but then they must find it difficult to

ward off all self-complacency. I have too much pride, and too little humility and single-mindedness, ever to have such influence for good, and not be lifted up by it. I wonder if any character that has this great fault in it, can ever be the instrument of leading others in the right way. Papa's letter had drawn my thoughts into a right channel. The arrival of the Indian mail was always a great event in our country-life. And so I went down-stairs to impart my good news. I had been wakened out of my selfish fit, and now I was struck with my aunt's sad pale face. My heart smote me for having overlooked it so long. She was very patient and uncomplaining, but there was no hiding the inward suffering.

“Dear aunt, I am afraid I have been very selfish and naughty; I have kept so much to myself and hugged my grief, all the time forgetting that I might at least try to comfort you.”

“Oh no, dear Agnes! don't reproach yourself; I find—

‘The flowers to heal our woe,
Familiar by our pathway grow.’

And although I have not much heart for household duties, I believe they are the best medicines. I must not expect to reconcile myself to the vacant place. God has given me strength to bear up, and I have had such a long spell of happy life, that, in

gratitude to Him, I would bear this patiently, if I cannot cheerfully."

"Aunt, will you help me with your advice about the spending of dear Arthur's legacy? I have applied once or twice to Mary, but somehow we never get on well together; perhaps it is all my fault, but she is so cold and matter-of-fact. Please, don't be angry with me for saying so."

"I am not angry; but I am pained that you should be so little able to appreciate Mary's excellence. My dear Agnes, it would be well if all were as valuable and useful in a house as Mary is."

"Now, Auntie, don't open your eyes, but I could not live alone in the house with Mary; and I am ashamed to say, that I cannot see this wonderful perfection of character. I should be very sorry to be like her."

"You never will be; but yours is a character full of quicksands."

"Stop! I don't mean to say for a moment that I am contented with myself; only I cannot say I wish to be Mary."

"I, for one, could not do without her, Agnes. But I will say, as Mary says to you, 'I am not going to argue the point.'"

"Please, don't; for that is always the climax of her aggravations. She is just as obstinate and

unconvinced as I am ; but she gives others the idea of having given in."

" I wish you would take a lesson from her, for the love of argument is far more aggravating to most people than silence is to you. Besides, you are always sure to lose your temper, and say a great many things you don't really mean, when you begin to argue. It requires a cool temper and a clear logical head to succeed in arguments, and can you lay claim to either ? "

" I am afraid not. And a hundred times I have made good resolutions never to argue again, which I am sure to break the first time Charlie and I disagree."

" I wish you could see how unlovely that positive spirit is ; I am sure it would be the best cure. But now I must tell about my letter from your dear father, for I have had one too, and we have wandered strangely from the subject. He tells me that he wishes you to go out to India next autumn, and to leave school at Easter, so as to have plenty of time to get your outfit, which must be sent round the Cape. So you see it is of importance that you should return to school as soon as possible, that precious time may not be wasted."

" Yes ; I only ask a week. My business will be done then. I cannot believe the time is really

coming ; it seems like a dream. Oh ! I pray nothing may happen. I don't feel now as if I could look forward quite so hopefully ; something makes me afraid."

" That is because you have known sorrow, and looked upon death for the first time ; but that shadow will pass away from your young heart. It must ; the first blow is never crushing. It is well that we have something to sober us when life is beginning, although we may need much more to make us see this life in its true light. I hope and trust a very bright future is in store for you. Now let me look over your paper."

We discussed my difficulty, and soon planned out what I had to do. My aunt decided that I should go alone on my errand of charity. Perhaps she knew that the presence of another might add to the constraint and nervousness I felt in undertaking so new a duty. It was a difficult task. I am afraid it was but poorly executed, for I shrank from speaking all I had to say to the poor people about their young minister's last wishes. I was afraid of breaking down. It was very gratifying and very affecting to find how beloved he had been. He was always in his element when trying to comfort sorrow or alleviate distress ; and understood the ways of the poor so well, that he did not feel shy of speaking to them

freely. I longed to be as at home with them as he had been.

When I went back to school, I found Miss Harley had introduced a new evening amusement. Once a week we were to write a paper on any subject we chose—not an essay—either a tale or a fragment, or anything that we felt in the humour for. These papers were all anonymous, and put into a bag of which Miss Harley kept the key. As she read them we were unable to guess the authoress by the handwriting, and so we were not *génée* by the fear of being discovered. With my fancy for authorship this was a great delight to me, and I am sure it was a much better method of endeavouring to improve our style, than the irksome system of essay-writing, which is so common in schools. Girls of twelve or thirteen are made to write down their thoughts on abstruse and dry subjects, about which they have never, and probably will never trouble their heads again. Our “budget-evenings,” as we called them, were quite looked forward to, and it was a very safe vent for my scribbling hobby.

Dear Miss Harley and May Sherwood were full of affectionate sympathy for me when I returned to school with my sad face and black dress. Miss Harley wisely said but little; but I knew how much she felt for me, by all her kind devices to cheer me—

a drive here, or a walk there, a chat with her in the evening, and other little indulgencies for which I felt very grateful. At the same time she encouraged me to work hard, and exercise self-command over my feelings ; and time and change brought their own healing. It was not long before I regained my happy spirits, although I never never forgot Arthur.

I knew I should feel the return home very much, and so I begged my aunt to ask May Sherwood to spend the Christmas holidays with me. I wanted to show her my home, and I was sure she would be very happy at the Manor House. I don't know which was the best pleased when it was all settled and May's guardian had given permission. I wrote and begged Ellen to exercise her best taste in the preparation of May's room, which I must share as long as she remained with us.

To add to our happiness, letters came from India to say we were to go out together overland, and May's mother begged my aunt to allow her to choose her outfit at the same time as I did. Sunshine was coming back again ; I was to join my beloved father, and May was to be as a sister to me. Arthur's spirit seemed to look down upon me with its gentle love, and bid me rejoice and thank God for all His goodness. Now that the pain of parting was past, there was no bitterness in thinking of him.

CHAPTER XI.

MAY SHERWOOD met with a warm welcome from all at home. She was not pretty, but very taking, and had a bright look that won the heart of beholders. As great a talker as myself, but without my sharpness of manner—but I have already described her character; I must sketch her personal appearance. Rather short and plump,—fair hair, nice open forehead,—grey eyes,—well-formed nose,—mouth somewhat large, with good teeth. I don't know whether this will convey any idea of her, for the indescribably sunny expression of her face was its great charm. While I am describing I may say something about Ellen's appearance. She was strikingly handsome; tall and stately looking, with rich brown hair, light hazel eyes, full well-shaped mouth, which smiled very sweetly when it did smile; but the expression of the face was grave. Her profile was classical, and the head well formed and gracefully set upon the shoulders. There was a little want of softness in the eye; indeed, altogether

her manner was distant and rather chilling, but underneath that exterior beat a heart which was warm, tender, and devoted. My aunt had a sweet placid face ; her manner was very quiet, and as I said before, her voice in speaking was the sweetest I ever heard. My uncle was tall, not handsome, but pleasant looking and very gentlemanly. As to Charlie, he was really a noble looking fellow ; very like Ellen, but a jovial edition of her. He knew quite well he was handsome ; took it as a matter of course, and made the most of the advantage.

What a pretty home scene the drawing-room presented at tea time ! The bright fire, and closed curtains ; and, round the table, the circle of seven, my aunt presiding. There was one picture on the wall to which our eyes often wandered. It was a melancholy sweet face ; the face of one who was not present, except perchance in spirit, and the sad dresses said in their own silent language that there was a blank, an empty place in that room, in which we were to all appearance chatting gaily. How often beneath our merriest laughter lies an undertone of sadness, of which we are most conscious when the sound of our gaiety reproaches us !

But I must take May round the room, and show her all the old familiar things. Dear papa's picture,

which always seemed to follow me with its kind eyes wherever I went ; the chessboard and men he sent to my uncle as a present from India—very grand they were ; but there, in a rough wooden box with a sliding cover, lay all the stumpy clumsy chessmen, that had really seen good service, and had been the subject of many a hearty quarrel between Charlie and myself.

“ No, Charlie,” I said. “ Don’t pretend you didn’t get angry ; how often have you thrown down all the men in disgust, when I have taken your queen ! ”

“ And how many tears of mortification have you shed at your humiliating defeat ! ”

“ Oh ! it’s the old story, May. We were always at war ; it’s only lately that we have given up fighting, because it does not quite become the dignity of our respective ages.”

“ We won’t do it again till the next time, that’s the truth, Miss Sherwood ; before many hours are over there’ll be thunder and lightning, and no mistake.”

“ Really, Charlie, you ought to be ashamed of talking such slang. You are incorrigible. I believe when you’re an old grey-headed man you will keep up the old school-boy language.”

“ These are the first drops of the shower, Miss Sherwood.”

“Oh, no ; I’ve no time to waste upon you to-night. Look here, May—that painted, ivory mangoe was my delight when a small child. I dare say you have seen many like it. It opens, and inside is an elephant, howdah, driver, and riders complete. This marble lion we brought from Florence. We spent two years abroad, you know, and Auntie, like a wise woman, would not let me see the statues until I knew the Heathen mythology, and could take an interest in all the gods and goddesses. Charlie was such a Goth ; he didn’t care a bit for anything abroad, and longed to be at home with Sir Bedivere and his fishing-rod. There’s Sir Bedivere’s *fac simile* drawn by Ellen, who is, by-the-bye, very clever with her pencil. This is a book for which I have a great veneration. It was given me by my godmamma, when I was a very small child, and I never had it in my possession until I was ten years old ; and till that time I thought no book half so beautiful.”

A thousand other relics were displayed, and their history told, until there was a general exclamation that I must be tired with so much talking, and May of listening ; and so we restrained our conversational powers until we retired to our bed-rooms. I am afraid it was very, very late before we left the snug fire, and lay our weary heads upon our pillows.

Next day we had determined to go out and make

a collection of holly, mistletoe, and evergreens for the Christmas decorations. We always kept Christmas very scrupulously, after the fashion of the olden time; and presents were given, and good wishes interchanged, till pockets were empty, and every one had got the right and proper share of both. When we were all small children, Christmas was the golden day to which we looked forward, and back upon the whole year round. Then there used to be Christmas trees and surprises of all sorts. But we had grown too old for that now. The only amusement that was retained was a sort of "budget," only every one was expected to write verses. Poor Charlie was always in despair, and generally ended by making a miserable parody upon something that had been parodied a hundred times, so that he was always discovered, and always had to tell a story about it. Once he departed from his general rule, and tried to pass off a long sentimental ballad as his own; but the obscure volume out of which he dug it, had been found lying about his room, and he was convicted of the ruse. He was such a pickle, when a child, that he nearly sent nurse's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, he used to say. However that might be, nurse thought nobody like Mr. Charles, now that he had escaped sound in limb from all his ventures to the roof of the house, on the outside ledge of the nursery widow, and on

small rafts of his own making on the mill stream. Once, Charlie had persuaded me to accompany him by stealth, and, of course, upset me into the water when we wished to land, so that I was carried home by a labourer with dripping clothes, and in great disgrace. Why do people ever despair of mischievous boys, and shake their heads so gravely at all their heedless naughtiness? They generally turn out very well in the end, where there is only thoughtlessness and recklessness, and a love of adventure, at the bottom of all their escapades.

As we took our walk to the chase that morning, we passed many a spot which had been the scene of some adventure. The hollow tree, up the inside of which Charlie had made me climb, and then deserted me, to my infinite terror, while he stood below and laughed at my piteous entreaties that he would come and help me down again. "I never was a timid child, May," I said, "but I always had an intense dislike to worms; they always took away my pleasure in gardening. Fancy my horror, one day, to find Charlie chasing me with one of these long wriggling things. I ran shrieking away, but my merciless pursuer was too swift for me, and the object of my aversion just struck against my bonnet, and then fell at my feet. Of course, it made me hate a worm more than ever. Ellen was so good and staid, she never got into scrapes; and I don't

think Mary was ever a child at all ; certainly I never remember her as anything but what she is."

By that time Charlie had caught us up, and on we trudged to the wood. How exhilarating a clear frosty day is ! It was a glorious Christmas-eve ; every blade of grass glittering with the hoar frost, and our footsteps sending out a crisp, ringing sound like tiny bells. The air seemed to teem with life, it was so pure and bracing. It was no time for thinking sad thoughts. Much as I wished to see one sacred spot in the churchyard, I said, " Not now, Charlie ; I will go this evening." And so we went straight home, when we had gathered all we wanted. Then I took May to see old Nurse. She was a very important person in the house, and I never omitted to introduce my particular friends to her.

" Nurse, this young lady and I were play-fellows in India, and dear mamma and her mother were great friends. Tell her something about her."

Nurse, once started on her favourite subject of bye-gone days, " When I knowed your ma—poor dear," didn't soon stop ; and May and I made ourselves comfortable by the old nurse's chair and listened.

" Was I at all like what mamma was, when I was a child ? "

" Oh no, Miss Agnes ; you was a very naughty little thing sometimes. Why, bless your heart, your

ma never gave nobody any trouble. Now, I've often had for to whip you."

"She is very fond of me now though, May, and I love her in spite of all the whippings. I remember quite well crying myself to sleep one night, because she had forgotten to kiss me after I was in bed. Mark my words, May, if I ever have a child, and nurse lives to see it, she will have forgotten all the naughtiness, and there never will have been any child half so wonderful or so good as his or her mamma, Miss Agnes, was."

"I never could have forgotten to kiss you, Miss Agnes. You must have been naughty that night. Before your poor dear ma died, she says to me, 'Nurse,' says she, 'you must never let my child have her own way,' says she. 'So, Miss, I always did what your ma told me.' What's that you're making, dear?"

"Don't ask me just now, nursey. Can't you fancy where I wish to put a garland of evergreens to-night?" And I looked at her meaningfully.

"Oh yes, to be sure;" and the old lady wiped her spectacles, and said no more.

When the moon had risen, I put on my warmest wrappings, and went out alone to the churchyard. I wanted to be there at the time the bells would begin to chime, and everything else would be quiet. The

church was close to the house, so that I had but a few steps to go.

I carried the holly-wreath in my hand. There, under the solemn yew tree, lay the mortal remains of our beloved Arthur. The bright rays of the winter moon struggled through the sombre foliage.

“Slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years.”

The grave was a simple white marble cross, and on the slab beneath—

IN MEMORY OF
ARTHUR MAITLAND,
BORN JAN. 24.
DEPARTED THIS LIFE AUG. 5,
AGED 24.

“Then are they glad because they are at rest; and so He bringeth them into the haven where they would be.”

I stood thinking how that this time last year he was with us, listening to those very bells he loved so much to hear; and now is he joining in a more unearthly strain of rejoicing, or is he sleeping the sleep of the just? Little matter! I know he must be very, very happy, and we must put away our selfish thoughts.

The next morning I resolved to take his place at the organ, and play the Christmas hymns as he used

to do, very early, soon after daybreak. Might he not be listening to a heavenly "Gloria in Excelsis,"—a song which no man could learn; something of which our most glorious music is but the faintest, most discordant imitation? This was the first Christmas anniversary I had known with any tinge of sadness in it. No wonder that as we advance in years we shrink from any rejoicing on anniversaries, even of the happiest events in our life. Year after year we have lost some link of our golden household chain; not every year one, perhaps, but each separation has taken long to heal, and there are deep scars to show what time has wrought. It requires a large measure of faith, when such is the case, to look happily, and with a full assurance, to a re-union with all we love hereafter. Alas! do we not too often feel, How can I hope to meet all? or, How do I know that I shall reach that home? These were not my thoughts then. When I thought of Arthur, it was with a swelling heart; but I was young, and a bright future lay before me.

CHAPTER XII.

ABOUT this time I began to have some suspicions of an approaching event in the family circle. A gentleman who lived in our neighbourhood had become very constant in his visits at the Manor House, and seemed very anxious to establish himself in Ellen's favour. He was some fifteen years older than her; grave like herself, good looking and gentlemanly; and, as far as I could judge, a pleasant person. Rather too silent and reserved, perhaps. It was amusing to watch how he showed his preference. He could not make pretty speeches (I liked him all the better for that), and Ellen gave him no opportunity of knowing anything but the surface of her character. This quiet sober courtship (if it may be so called) went on for some time, and then the engagement was announced, and the course of silent love flowed on as before. Ellen would not hear of the marriage taking place until the next autumn, when the year of mourning should have passed. I could not help wondering how such an era in her

life could occur without disturbing her composure somewhat ; but there was no sentimentality about her, and she loved gravely, in harmony with her own grave self.

“ You don’t seem to have many friends here, Agnes, of your own age ;—how is it ? ” said May to me one day.

“ Well, I don’t know ; at least I think it is because I don’t care for making great friendships except with those some years older than myself. I don’t seem to get on with girls beyond a certain degree of acquaintance. You are the only ‘bosom friend’ I have. It is not because I am reserved. Indeed, I cannot account for it. I suppose my disposition has not found another to harmonize exactly with it, amongst the young ladies here. You have much larger capacities for liking than I have. I seldom find any one I can be *very* fond of, and I am ashamed to say I often take intense dislikes even at first sight.”

“ I don’t understand that. I have often wondered at your decided expressions of aversion when you have only seen a person once or twice.”

“ It is *very* bad of me, but argue as I will, I cannot get over it ; and I am sure I make myself perfectly odious to the object of the dislike which I cannot hide. The worst of it is, that these first impressions generally turn out to be true. I think it must be a

sort of instinct, only I ought to dislike no one so strongly, even if I cannot like them."

"But, Agnes, you do yourself injustice; you talk as if you were one of those stiff people who keep every one at a distance, whereas your manner is particularly taking and cordial, and you have always plenty to say for yourself."

"Far too much sometimes, for I come out with things that I ought to keep to myself, and I often am vexed for my want of caution. Still I maintain I make few great friends—such friends as I should be heartily grieved to lose sight of."

"Does your aunt ever give parties?"

"Oh yes; not balls or regular dances, but a sort of half-and-half, charades and a little dancing intermixed. Charlie always insists upon the latter, for he is very fond of a waltz or galop. Ellen does not care for dancing, and Mary thinks it wrong. I wonder why people think it wrong. I cannot see what possible harm there is in going round and round a little faster than usual."

"It is not that," said May, laughing. "I have heard people object to the gentleman's arm being round the lady's waist."

"*'Honi soit qui mal y pense,'* why that is a mere question of custom. I suppose we should think it a liberty if any one offered to rub noses with us; and

yet that is the fashionable token of friendship amongst savages. In days gone by, even in civilized old England, the gentleman used to kiss the lady's hand or cheek. Now in the ball-room it is the fashion to encircle the waist with the arm."

"But, you see, the people who object to that position are not accustomed to the sight—they shun ball-rooms."

"Well, now, I'll tell you what my idea is. Every one ought to obey the promptings of their own conscience. They who think it wrong should stay away, and not condemn those for going who do not think it wrong."

"I agree with you; but then the difficulty is to keep within right limits. I think any amount of gaiety that tells upon the health, or interferes with one's duties in any way, is wrong. But most people cannot use such moderation."

"There, too, I shake hands with you. And, my dear May, it is quite charming to find any one who will listen to me without thinking me either too tight-laced or too broad in my views. Mark you, they are only my views; my practice remains to be tested. I dearly love a dance! It always seems to put some quicksilver into my composition, and I don't think one bit more about attracting admiration than at other times; indeed less, because I know it is hopeless to

expect admiration for my looks or my dancing, though I dearly love it for other things."

"There's a confession!—are you not ashamed to make it?"

"Well, I would not proclaim it to all the world: but do you believe it possible that the woman exists who does not care for admiration?"

"I have not thought much about it; but my impulse is to say, Yes."

"No, no, May. Each one has her own point; one piques herself on her goodness; alas! another on her looks; a third on her sweet temper; a fourth on her talent; a fifth on her powers of conversation."

"Oh, spare the rest! Have you never seen a humble-minded person?"

"Yes, and *she* piques herself on her humble-mindedness."

"For shame, Agnes! you are most unmerciful; you have a bad idea of human nature."

"Perhaps I am wrong, and my notions may be suggested by my own disposition; but I feel loth to believe that I am worse than anybody else; and so I judge others by myself."

"And what do you judge of me?"

"Now that is a conceited question. Papa says in one of his letters, a humble-minded person would never ask 'What do you think of me? I am not so

silly as to think you perfect ; but I love you very much, you dear old thing."

" I don't believe 'Love makes one blind,' so I am not the least offended ; my notion is, that it makes one quick to perceive the slightest defect—jealous of the smallest speck."

" Yes : only no one else must venture to hint at its existence. Of all things, hearing any one I love found fault with makes me lose my temper soonest."

" It is very trying, certainly—especially when one cannot with truth deny the occasion for censure."

" Besides, May, what is love worth, if it is not proof against any amount of aggravation from the person loved ?"

" So we shall have you choosing some grumpy, disagreeable husband, eh ? to prove the depth and intensity of your affection."

" Oh, I don't say that. But I think that nothing is more irritating than to live with a perfect character—it makes one feel oneself so dreadfully bad."

" Some of your propositions are a little startling, or rather would be to one who did not know you as I do."

" Well, our pleasant little chat must end now. How nice it is to find any one who will enjoy this rambling kind of conversation ! Most young ladies would have voted me a great bore. I should have

scandalized Mary and mystified Ellen. Oh, I wish you were not going to leave us this week—I shall miss you terribly."

"Yes: I should like of all things to stay where I am till school-time comes again; but you see I have no choice. I am only too happy to think I shall be with you at Midsummer, and must not grumble. I wish, Agnes, the star of our friendship had risen years ago."

"Indeed I wish it had; but you needed it more than I did."

When May left us, I seemed to miss Arthur more than ever, and the fortnight that remained before school began again passed very heavily. I was mostly with Ellen, for Charlie was out all day. She and I used to read together, and I tried to take an interest in what we read, but it was hard work; and then my music—who cared to listen now, and who would play to me? I used to fancy I heard Arthur's voice in every note; indeed the music always woke such a train of sad recollections that playing was no pleasure; and so I wandered about in a listless way often becoming quite fretful and discontented, and made more unhappy still by the consciousness that I was acting wrongly in thus giving way to a morbid unhappiness, quite taking a pride in hugging my grief. Was mine an uncommon case? Do not many

think it interesting to sit brooding over their sorrow without one effort to occupy their minds,—heedless of the gloom they cast on others? Oh! it is beautiful to see an heroic spirit struggling to keep all the winter of its heart to itself, that it may not blight the happiness of others,—bravely resolving, cost what it may, this burden I will cast upon the Lord only; the world may think me heartless, forgetful of my loss, but, God helping me, I will not heed that! Such unselfishness is rare, but I have seen it, and thanked Him who had given such strength to his poor helpless ones to bear their appointed lot.

Immediately on my return to school, and the healthy vigorous atmosphere of work, all my fretfulness vanished. My last half-year lay before me, and there was much to do. True, my self-education, the most important of all, would last my life long; but when should I have such advantages again, such uninterrupted time for study, and when (which was to one of my character a great attraction), should I have such means of measuring my advancement with that of others? There was real enjoyment in school life to me. I saw so quickly the result of all I did, and that is always encouraging. Let me learn a lesson correctly—be well prepared for a class—instantly I was rewarded by a high mark, and a smile from Miss Harley. There is no doubt we ought to work

with the same earnestness when we can look for no immediate result or payment; but so long as we are mortal, such speedy reward must be a spur to action. I have often thought how Jacob's heart must have failed at the prospect of seven years of servitude for Rachel's love. Unless we have (figuratively speaking) some notch to mark the day by, some visible sign of the invisible progress towards the attainment of our desire, how much more difficult it becomes to abate no effort, and to lose no heart!

Speaking of marks; we had, of course, both bad and good,—debit and credit. Amongst us, some always kept their eye fixed on the column of good marks, others on the dark side of the page. The first forgot everything in the desire to swell the sum of good marks; while the less hopeful and more cautious ones strove only to avoid the bad. I don't know which won in the end. I was of the former set; and while I won honours at my classes and by my written exercises, I took no heed how my account of bad marks was running up for untidiness and carelessness. I was very sorry when the time came for leaving what had been less school to me than a happy home, and I felt Miss Harley was grieved to part with me. She told me (and I could quite believe it) that one of the greatest trials of her life as a Schoolmistress was the constant change of pupils;—

that she no sooner became truly attached to an old pupil, then she had to endeavour to transfer her affections to a new one.

“ I shall have grave steady classes now, Agnes ; and I shall sadly miss your merry laugh, though it has so often given me great trouble. Why the house will be quite silent without you,” she said, “ and you are going so far away,—oh ! when can I hope to see you again ? You must write to me from time to time, and tell me all you are doing, and thinking ; anything will interest me.”

“ I promise I will ; it is always easy to write when one is convinced that, even if one writes no news, or nothing striking, whatever comes first into one’s head to say will give pleasure.”

“ I hope you won’t sink into the habit of indolence in which most Indian ladies are said to indulge. I should grieve so if you allowed all your good abilities and natural energy of character to run to waste.”

“ I don’t feel as if I should be tempted to do that, however I won’t boast—*Nous verrons.*”

“ There is one bad habit, Agnes, which is rather growing upon you, and which must be mastered.”

“ What is that ? ”

“ Well, you will not now see the harm of it, but, believe me, it is a very bad habit. I mean day-dreaming, indulging in fits of abstraction. No, don’t

smile,—I want you to set about the correction of your fault gravely.”

“ But it is so delightful, Miss Harley, sometimes to withdraw into a world of one’s own imagining. I may make mine just what I wish, look either back or forward, and be quite independent of what is going on around. You know how useful I have often found it when talking or a class is going on. I have only, as it were, to shut my mental ears, and I can then go on with whatever I am doing, just as if I were alone.”

“ That is quite true ; and if you were only to exercise your powers of abstraction when you really need them, they would doubtless be of infinite service to you. But it is the *perversion* of the gift to absent yourself mentally when you ought to have all your wits about you. In time you will find how inconvenient it may be, not only to yourself, but others. In the first place, it is very rude not to give your attention to those who are speaking to you ; it often gives offence. Can’t you see what a selfish habit it is ? Tell me, are not your day-dreams always about yourself ? You are the centre of your imaginary scenes, and the principal actor (or rather actress) in them.”

“ Well, perhaps generally speaking, I am ; still I don’t think it is always so ; but, Miss Harley,

even when I try to collect my thoughts, I cannot do it when I am in one of my most absent humours."

"The worst of it is that absent people flatter themselves that it looks clever and thoughtful; and so they really will not try in good earnest to cure themselves. Now, really it becomes a disease of the mind if it is not checked; and though these day-dreams are, as you say, very charming, yet, giving oneself up to them brings the mind into a morbid sentimental state, which is anything but what it ought to be. There is such a good striking passage in 'Life in Earnest' about it:—'Can anything look more ridiculous than to see a person in one of these fits of waking sleep? The eyes staring in a fixed unmeaning manner; they answer you in a dreamy, random way; and commit all sorts of foolish blunders if they are called upon to do anything.' Ah, Agnes, you are incorrigible!"

I could not help laughing at the recollection of some absurd mistakes I had made in my absent moods, the occurrence of which was not allowed to be forgotten at school; but I felt the truth of what Miss Harley said, and promised to try and give it my best consideration.

"Now give me some more good advice, please. I feel in a humour to digest any amount of wis-

dom, until outfitting and preparations begin, and then——”

“ What then? This wild, excitable little soul of yours will be quite unmanageable. How will you step into the dignity and responsibility of your Indian life as a young lady? My dear flighty pupil, you want plenty of taming yet. Your wings are not cut close enough; and now you are escaping from my hands, and I shall have no more opportunity of clipping.” She put her arm round me and drew me to her. “ I don’t think I have been very severe or unmerciful—have I?”

“ Oh, no, indeed you have not; or I should not, could not, have loved you as I do. I have often wished I had a little more composure of manner, —more like Ellen, for instance: she never commits herself by too great unreserve or merriment.”

“ If you are only careful and watchful, I am not afraid for you; and you will have such a dear wise father to watch you; don’t for an instant try to play a part that is not natural, only keep your spirits and laughter under moderate control. It is always a fatal mistake to try to imitate one whose disposition differs essentially from our own. I have quite a contempt for any one who will copy even the mannerisms and peculiarities of those they admire.”

“ I shall tell you, now that there is no fear of your

being prejudiced by any one, how thankful I am that you never suspected me of untruthfulness."

"I should certainly never have dreamt of such a thing; but who would have tried to make me believe it?"

"Oh, at one time I was perfectly wretched because it was said of me (and the report came back through papa) that I was very inaccurate in my way of speaking; I longed so much to begin to reform myself, under the eye of some one who was free to form an unbiassed opinion."

"Well, now you put it in that light, I understand you better. I have noticed sometimes, a tendency to exaggeration; but you are much improved, and now seldom indulge in a hyperbolic strain. I should never dream even of hesitating, in accepting any statement of yours."

"Well, that's a great comfort. I believe I made myself unnecessarily miserable about it; but now my mind is at ease."

"And now I must order you to bed; for you are a ~~sadly~~ refractory puss, when the rational time for sleep comes round; and if I am not firm, you will coax me to go on talking for another hour. Good night."

CHAPTER XIII.

MAY SHERWOOD and I were to leave school together, and go up to London ; where my aunt would meet us.

The important business of outfitting, had to be transacted. What fun it was ! Shopping is delightful to young ladies in their teens, with plenty of money to spend, and liberty to use their own taste and discretion. It is a very different thing, when we have to think, “ Can I afford this ? Ought I not to turn, and do up my old silk ? Might not my merino be dyed ? The money that would buy me a new mantle, would pay that bill that is weighing on my mind, or set baby up in fine style.”

It is a pleasant sight to see how joyfully a prudent young wife will give up anything she has set her womanly heart upon, when the question is—“ Which shall be the gainer ; myself or my husband ? or, “ Myself or my child ? ”

May and I had nobody to consider. A certain sum

was made over to each of us, and with it we had no difficulty in satisfying all our little conceits. My aunt was a model of patience—even though it was a question of dress.

Here I am tempted to make one or two remarks on ladies' shopping. It makes me quite indignant to see them sitting by the hour together, heedless of the trouble they give, turning over piles of goods, and finally, perhaps, making up their minds to take the first article shown to them, or—nothing at all. Often it is the most trifling objection that makes them waver on for half an hour. "This check is a little too small;" "that colour is a thought too deep, or too pale," or "too light," or "too heavy;" and all the while this knotty point is racking their minds, the poor shopman stands before them, unrolling piece after piece, and uttering the same old hackneyed phrases of recommendation. True, they are paid for it; but if ladies would only think what a weary life that is! *We* think ourselves hardly used if we have to stand for an hour; but these men (and women too), who serve behind the counter, have to stand for, say ten hours a-day. The least we can do, is to give as little trouble as possible. Try to realize what standing for ten hours a-day must be. How the poor limbs must ache! I believe few can endure it very long. The want of fresh air, too, added to fatigue, sends many of

these poor shop-people to the hospital. Kind ladies, be somewhat more considerate. Have pity for those who must earn their bread, and are so much at the mercy of those who are often so unmerciful. Would not a little forethought prevent much of this indecision? Is it quite impossible to determine, before you enter the shop, the colour and pattern that will suit you?

At last, our outfits were all bought and finished. The dainty dresses, and bonnets, and flowers, and mantles, and a hundred other etceteras, which are necessary for the completeness of that most elaborate complication—a lady's wardrobe—were all duly packed, and sent off to the agent's care.

Still we lingered on, for a few days, in that busy world of London. Ellen's trousseau must be chosen; and we must have some musical treats; and see a few of the wonders of this world, my aunt said; and we were nothing loth. It stirs one up to be in London now and then, to mix for a little while in that great whirl and din. How mad it all seems when we come from the quiet country!

The constant rolling tide of life and business. Look at the myriad faces that pass you! How few are idle! How few seem even to have leisure enough not to hurry! Money-making men, with eager, thoughtful, calculating faces. Women laden with

parcels—ladies shopping. The very children have a sort of precocious sharpness and worldliness about them, which country children never have. The street boys in London are not to be matched for quickness and impudence. And add, to all this moving mass of human beings which distract the eye, the ceaseless roll of cabs, carts, carriages, and omnibuses, and the stentorian voices of the street-criers which confuse the ear and brain. Surely that giant city is the wonder of the world! We, who only see the fashionable or respectable parts of London, ah! how little can we form an idea of those fearful lanes and alleys, crowded—teeming with miserable, vice-tainted men and women!

Sometimes, as we roll from one place to another in our comfortable luxurious carriages, we have occasion to pass through the outskirts of these grim quarters; and then a sort of sickness seizes us at the sight of such places, and the hardened, sullen faces which we come across. This glimpse of life, such as we can form no conception of, makes us start—I might have been such an one. It is only of God's goodness that I am not. That wretched, half-drunken woman, with her puny baby in her arms, might have been in my place, and I might have taken hers. But, while we are thinking these thoughts, we have gradually emerged from the darkened atmosphere, and again we are surrounded

with sights of wealth, and beauty, and prosperity
Why did the stupid coachman bring us through such a place? It is enough to give one fever, or small-pox, or other infectious horrors. We are born to be comfortable and happy, and not to know what want and wickedness are! It really was incomprehensibly stupid of the coachman. Let us go to the park, and forget all about it.

And is no secret thanksgiving offered up to Him, who has given you so abundantly of the blessings of this life, that you have ceased to look upon them as more than your due? May God forgive us our selfishness and ingratitude!

The wedding took place soon after our return to the Manor House. At Ellen's request, it was a very quiet one. Her home was not to be far off.

Mr. Annesley, her husband, had a comfortable income, and small estate, which he had inherited from his father. Her future life promised to be one just suited to Ellen. As a handsome woman, with a cultivated mind, she was well fitted for her present position. She only wanted a little more cordiality of manner to make her a general favourite. As it was, all must look up to and esteem her for her worth. I often thought she reminded me of Abigail—“A woman of a good understanding, and of a fair countenance.”

When the bride and bridegroom returned from

their wedding trip, I paid them a short visit, as the time for my leaving England was drawing very near. Ellen had exercised her taste in the arrangement of her house. There was a charming air of quiet elegance about it.

I felt uneasy lest I should disturb its placid appearance by any rough intrusion of work-basket, or other paraphernalia, which I never possessed the knack of keeping in anything like order. They were too grave a couple. The quiet atmosphere somewhat oppressed me, and my own spirits rose to make up the deficiency.

Ah ! I thought to myself, children would be welcome in this house. Their merry little voices would be music, and their bright wee faces sunshine, to warm this chilly aspect ! I should not be sorry to see reckless little fingers disturbing the arrangement of this table. *I dare not do it deliberately.*

Charlie used to light up the house wonderfully, when he rode over from the manor, as he often did. Ellen was very fond of him.

And now, having established my cousin in her home, I must prepare to say "good-bye" to what had hitherto been mine.

One by one, I took leave of all the old haunts and all the familiar faces in the village of Dudleigh. Should I ever come back again ? And if I did, what

changes should I find? I was scarcely eighteen, but I had already witnessed death—and I knew there would, in all probability, be other blanks in the circle before many years passed by. Which should be taken? Ah! if we only could know *which*, how terrible it would be! It is well for us that all is hidden. If I had been told two years before, “Arthur will be the one.” Would it not have been a shadow to darken the next year? which (as I knew not what was coming) was a happy time to me, and to all of us. Good-bye, dear home! good-bye! I will ask no prying questions. Our duty is with the present. It is good to look back sometimes, and spell over the lessons of the past, but there is danger in speculating on the hidden future.

Stand there, at the foot of the quiet grave in the churchyard, and reflect. Soon you must plunge into the novelties and excitement of a journey to your new home; you will then have little time or inclination for sober thinking.

You have no wish for Arthur’s rest just now, Agnes! Your heart is beating with life, and hope, and expectation. Looking forward to your bright future, it is more and more strange to you, how any one *can* wish to die! You are afraid to think how unwilling you would be; and a vague sense of terror comes over you at the very possibility of receiving

such a summons. And yet, perhaps, if you could see all the weary struggle before you,—the struggle with sin, and sorrow, and sickness, and solitude,—you would ask to die, before you tasted of the bitter cup. Remember what Arthur said, how that he “grieved to think how much might be needed to bring your spirit low.”

I will not dwell longer on the “good-byes.” All came down to Southampton to see me off. May Sherwood and I were to be joint tenants of a snug little cabin, and under the care and protection of a lady and gentleman who were friends of my father.

Everything looked new and strange, and the excitement of parting did not tend to sober us. There were sad, tearful faces on deck. Some were sobbing—some laughing—some looking astonished—and a few (who had passed through similar ordeals before, and had come down alone to Southampton) were indifferent spectators of the scene. At last, all but the passengers were ordered off. Good-bye! good-bye!

The band struck up to drown those last words, and laugh off, as it were, the sadness of the moment. But the gay music sounded somewhat hysterical, for the tears were not all dried.

There,—on the shore from which we were fast receding,—were many pale faces in the crowd, hand-

kerchiefs waving, and figures in the background pushing forward eagerly for a last look, until all became confused and indistinct in the distance.

“Well, May,” I said, “here we are; I don’t quite like leaving Old England, and I don’t at all like leaving aunt and uncle, and cousins; but in a day or two, I expect, we shall be very happy. India is not so very distant, after all. These parting scenes must have been far sadder when the overland route was not thought of, and letters took so long to come and go.”

“Agnes, I wonder whether either, or both of us, will live to come back again!”

“Yes, that is the gravest thought of all, May.”

HOME IN INDIA.

INTRODUCTION.

HOME IN INDIA! People scorn the idea, or laugh at it as something preposterous, and no doubt there are many to whom India is a land of exile from all that are nearest and dearest to them. But there are others (and by far the greater number) who are surrounded by those they love—live in comfort, if not in luxury. Why should they scorn the idea? Why should they be ever restlessly looking forward to a home which they may never be allowed to reach—or reach when the youth which gives zest to enjoyment is passed, and the sobered fancy of declining years refuses to realize the anticipated happiness to which they have been so long looking forward? Surely it would be much happier for us to look upon India as our *home*, and not to shut our eyes to the blessings which surround us.

Not that I would cry down or deprecate the true British feeling of love for Old England; but try better and more fully to appreciate the throng of ideas which no country but our own has embodied in a single word, "Home." Not meaning any particular place in any particular country—nothing so narrow minded. Any spot in the wide, wide world where our earthly affections are centered! and to which our thoughts turn oftenest and most tenderly, as associated with the dear ones God has given us to love, and whom we pray earnestly to meet in our Home above.

N.B. I need scarcely say this was written before 1857. Still we, who have years of India in prospect, must try to shut our eyes to all its miseries, and the recollection of the terrible past, and coin happiness out of cheerful, thankful hearts.

HOME IN INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE overland journey to India is now an oft-told tale. I feel that I should only weary my readers if I were to ask them to accompany me over the familiar ground of Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, Aden, and Ceylon. Even the venerable pyramids are now divested of their robe of romance and mystery. Brown, Smith, and Jones have recorded their names on the summits of those gigantic edifices; “done” the pyramids to their complete satisfaction—and now, what was to our ancestors a dream, a fable, has become a common place—a cockney resort.

All was new to May Sherwood and myself; and our enjoyment of such new scenes and countries was in no way diminished by the knowledge that it was not new to all the world. Landing at Alexandria, I felt myself transported in imagination to the times of the Arabian nights, and was only awoke from my

reveries by the rude realities of the desert vans ; the shaking, and the cramping, and the bitter cold night air, the blinding, suffocating sand, and other miseries, which will so soon be forgotten in the luxury of a first-class railway carriage gliding on the line from Cairo to Suez. How delighted we were with Ceylon and the beauties of Wock Walley, and how tempting the displays of jewellery, carved ebony, tortoiseshell, little baskets fitting neatly into each other, and all the other inducements to spend the money which you have not had an opportunity of spending for three weeks. I say for three weeks, because the most determined spendthrift can find nothing worth buying at Aden, that most barren and desolate place. So every one makes up for the impossibility at Ceylon. Knowing, moreover, that the surf will (in all probability) deter them from landing at Madras. The long six weeks over, we find ourselves steaming up the Hooghly ; by that time the excitement has become great on board ; many gentlemen who have large bets on the precise minute the anchor will be dropped, are walking up and down watch in hand, to calculate the chance of their success : the young ladies have put on all their finery—the latest fashions wherewith to dazzle the eyes of the Calcutta folks. May and I had not thought of this, and so we felt a little

dowdy in the midst of this gay group, and consoled ourselves with the thought that we were very sensible, and the other young ladies very silly and weak-minded. We could keep our wits about us, too, for neither my father nor May's were to meet us in Calcutta. I was glad of this when I saw the crowd that came on board when we dropped anchor. Husbands and wives, and parents and children, meeting in such a scene, and in so public a place, was positively painful to my mind. I watched some who were looking with strained eager eyes at the figures coming up the ship-ladder; and then how the blood rushed to the cheeks, and the lips trembled with emotion and joy. I thought of my own father and how my turn was coming soon—very soon, a few weeks hence—and my heart was very full. At last the gentleman who had taken charge of us all the way from England, came up to me in company with another gentleman who held letters in his hand.

“Mr. Thornton,—Miss Sherwood,—Miss Malcolm.”

This was the friend with whom we were to stay in Calcutta. He had a kind cheerful face and cordial manner, and made himself the more welcome by his letter from papa. That dear father had welcomed me at every stage of my journey with written words of love, and these were not the least tender of all those words of welcome.

I could read them but hurriedly, as our friend was anxious to see us and our luggage clear of the ship ; so we bade good-bye to such of our fellow passengers as remained on board, and followed him.

“ May, can you believe we are actually in India ? ” I said, as we landed on Calcutta ground.

“ No, dear, not in the least. I think I’m dreaming, it’s all so strange ; what large tall houses, and how very green everything looks ! ”

“ Do look at those men running beside the carriages with great switches in their hands.”

Mr. Thornton was much amused with our delight and astonishment, and we asked a thousand questions in a breath, which he answered most good-naturedly.

Mrs. Thornton met us on the steps of the portico. It seemed to me as if the house swarmed with servants, stealing about with silent shoeless feet.

In the drawing-room (such a large lofty unfurnished looking room), on a small square drugget, sat a pale child, taking his evening meal, which was being administered to him out of a dainty bowl with a silver spoon ; another servant at his elbow amusing him at the same time with Hindostanee stories. The child showed no shyness, but only stared at us with his large brown eyes when we spoke to him. It did not occur to me that he did not understand us. When he had finished his bowl of sago, he

pronounced two authoritative words, and the tall man who had been feeding him vanished instantly. There was something comical in the tiny creature's lordly manner, and I looked at Mrs. Thornton and smiled.

"What did those two words mean that caused the hasty retreat of the servant?"

"That's enough—go ;'" answered Mrs. Thornton. "There's no word for 'thank you' in Hindostanee, and none for 'if you please.' "

A little cry from the next room announced that the baby was awake, so we went to make acquaintance with her. She was on the ayah's knee, who was sitting cross-legged on the floor rocking slowly backwards and forwards, and singing a low monotonous song.

"Oh, May!" I said; "don't you remember that song? It seems to me I heard it in a dream long long ago."

This feeling often recurred to me, the taste of fruits, the scent of flowers, all came back to me as something familiar.

We stayed one week in Calcutta, during which time we saw some of the gay doings in that gay place. We went to one ball, and two or three large dinner parties, which latter I thought very heavy and stupid: people sat so long at table, and everything was so formal, and on such an extravagant scale.

We were to go up the country in a carriage drawn by men—a novel mode of travelling to us—but we had begun to take everything as a matter of course, and to be prepared for all sorts of unheard of things. Our carriage was well stocked with provisions for the way, as the dāk bungalow larders offered no variety to tempt the appetites of travellers. What a weary journey it was! I thought the six days and nights would never end; and what with the shouts and yells of the coolies who propelled us, and the cries of the jackals at night, we got but little sleep; and oh! the dust—it was terrible! At last, the end drew near, and then excitement made us more restless than ever. At the last stage a river had to be crossed, and so my father had a tent pitched for me on the side furthest from him. There I was to dress, and refresh myself with a cup of coffee; and he would meet me, and take me home in his carriage. May Sherwood had a little further to go, and so we parted at the place where the tent was pitched, and she continued her journey with her kind escort. The moment I alighted from the “garee,” a crowd of servants surrounded me to look at the “Missee Baba,” but I had no time to spare, I must be ready for my father. The hour so long looked forward to had come at last. Could I be dreaming? If my head were only clearer—but I was so confused, and trembled so, that

the ayah thought I was cold, and hurried the manufacture of the coffee. Ah! I was listening for the voice I had not heard, except in dreams, for fourteen years; and, with the strange inconsistency of the human heart, while this one thought of the coming meeting was filling every crevice of mine, I was intently counting the spots on the carpet, committing to memory the sea-weed pattern of the canvas walls, and bestowing the most elaborate attention on every minutiae of my toilette. I did not heed this at the time—but I know now—for all these trifles are impressed so distinctly on my mind, that nothing has escaped me. When it wanted but five minutes to the time, I took out my last letter from papa. It ran thus—“This day fortnight my darling Agnes landed in Calcutta, therefore, it is a day on which I think much of her—**THEREFORE**, do I say? not *therefore*. It is fourteen years since we parted. I am sure there has not a day passed in which you have not been in my thoughts, nor an earnest prayer breathed to my God in which your name has not been united with all that was dearest to my heart. I see you now—the quiet affectionate little creature who used to creep up by my side, put your little hand into mine, and nestle to my breast, where you ever found a warm and ready embrace. And now I am to get you back—not what I remember you—something far different; yet the

same. The same, above all, in the affection which you feel, and which you excite. Must not my heart be full when thoughts such as these pour into it, in a torrent which is quite bewildering?"

Was not that a footstep I heard ?

CHAPTER II.

THE voice is hushed now, and therefore it is the more thrilling, as I recall the tender words of greeting.—Oh, how I had tried to picture that meeting! What would my father say to me? How would he look after a separation of many years? What would he think of me? should I disappoint him? should I feel shy with him? or be able to pour out my very heart's thoughts to him, as I had so often longed to do when seas separated us? And now the moment had actually come. He was calling me; his arms enfolded me. It was papa that stood there, hushing my sobs of joy, and making me feel how real, and yet how overpowering it was; and then he held me at arm's length, and gazed at me so earnestly, so tenderly; going back in his mind, I fancied, to the hour of our parting, and trying to trace a likeness to the wife of his love. I was glad to think he would not be disappointed in that, for people said I had her eyes and smile.

“Yes, Agnes, my own; you are like her! And

now, let us get home as fast as we can," he added, after a pause.

So we crossed the river, stepped into the carriage, and soon arrived at our destination. There was the house to show me. My rooms prepared with so much thoughtful love, close to his, that he might often come and kiss me, or set his door open and look at me from time to time. And I followed him about with a nervous happiness. Yes, actually nervous; and strange to the feeling of being with papa.

"There is a nice spring couch for you, Agnes, and a marble table, which I thought looked cool. The writing-table you so much coveted, but would not buy in England. You see we can get pretty furniture in India too."

I could not express my thanks, though I longed to do so; but he saw I was delighted.

"Now you must come into my study, and see my treasures. You will recognise some old friends. There is the cushion you worked; and here a pen-wiper, which even you cannot recollect, though you came dancing into the room with it, as a present for papa, some fifteen years ago. Here is the little face that has often cheered me in my work; and made me redouble my efforts, when I thought I had such a child to work for."

"And do you think me altered, papa? I mean

would you have recognised my face again?" I said, as I looked at the laughing blue-eyed representation of myself, as a very small child holding a doll.

"Yes; very much altered. I should not have known you."

My heart sank. How would he love me, as I was—so altered. Again, what did he think of me? But I felt ashamed that my selfishness should interfere with the happiness of the moment. We knelt together, and my heart thrilled as I heard his words of thankfulness, that we had been permitted to meet, and then the prayer that we might help each other in our heavenward way. How could I help him? I, who was so full of faults; and he, so good, so far above me. I should surely disappoint him.

There were two or three friends of my father staying in the house, so that we could not have the pleasure of being quite alone together at first, and I must go through the ordeal of introduction, and begin to play my part of hostess at once. My journey had rather fatigued me, and my head ached with excitement. I dressed as in a dream. My glance at the glass dissatisfied me. How I wished I was pretty! I had never looked so plain, I thought. For I was very pale, and my hair would not look smooth. My reverie was interrupted by the dear voice. I put my arm in my father's, and, mingled with my nervous-

ness, I felt a pride in owning him, and being his daughter. Every one was ready for breakfast. As the guests were all friends of papa's, I wanted to be cordial, and succeeded pretty well, if they would only ask me more sensible questions.

“How happy you must be, Miss Malcolm, to see your father again!”

“How do you like India? Can you talk the language at all yet?”

As if my joy was not much too sacred to enlarge upon at such a time. As if I could possibly tell how I liked India, or could speak the language after a residence of two weeks. I had to look at the dear face opposite me to give myself patience.

The only lady beside myself was a stout, good-natured looking person, who seemed really to wish to be kind, but was decidedly silly, I thought.

Her husband had a shy, shrinking manner; but there was something in his sickly, benevolent face I liked. I fancied he was clever, but I could not overcome his shyness.

The other guest was a middle-aged gentleman, an engineer officer, who talked away vigorously to papa about roads, and bridges, and canals. He was passing through the station, and, for old acquaintance' sake, put up at my father's house for a day or two, *en route* to his destination. At last breakfast was over. Papa

carried off the shy gentleman to his study, and the stout lady carried me off in an opposite direction, to see her children. There were three nice little things, but all talking Hindostanee, and I at once gave up all attempts to make friends with them, secretly wondering how any English mother could allow her children to talk to her in anything but English. I think my face must have expressed disapproval, for the lady said, " You see, my dear Miss Malcolm, Hindostanee is much easier than English. Children pick it up so naturally, and really it is too much trouble to make them leave it off; I am very idle, and give in to the difficulty. After all, it doesn't much signify, for they forget it as soon as they land in England. My George and my Ellen had lost all their Hindostanee two months after they left Calcutta." I am afraid I passed a rather severe mental judgment on Mrs. Scott, as I looked at her. It was too great an exertion to try to make her children speak English, or to cultivate her own mind; but she could bestow plenty of attention and energy on her neighbours' affairs. She entertained me with a great deal of scandal and gossip about people I had never heard of in my life, and I looked down upon her, because she cared for such ill-natured nonsense. Ah, Agnes! and had you no faults graver than that?

The remainder of the morning was spent in un-

packing and displaying the contents of my boxes. The sight of all the pretty dainty articles, Mrs. Scott informed me, was a great treat, and reminded her of the time when she was a young lady just arrived in India. "But, my dear, I was not an only child, and my father could not afford me such an outfit as this. You are a fortunate girl."

Many times in the course of the day I stole into papa's room. When he was too busy to speak, I contented myself with looking at him, and making myself familiar with his looks and movements—running my eye over the rows of volumes in his library—inspecting the various little treasures on his mantel-piece and table; making the most, in fact, of my first day's privilege. I was right glad when dinner time came, and all the formidable bundles of papers were tied with red tape and stowed away in the office boxes, and I might talk without fear of interrupting.

"What joy this is to me, my child," said my father, folding me in his arms, "to be able now to look forward to the refreshment of your company, when work is over. There's still one gift, which I have reserved for your evening's treat."

"What is it—do tell me?"

"Well, run and put on your things, and then your curiosity shall be satisfied."

I need not say I soon joined my father. Before

the portico, proudly pawing the ground, stood a beautiful grey Arab horse. I had never seen any so perfect except in pictures. Of course, woman-like, I could not take my eyes off the head and mane, and made my comments accordingly. The gentle creature allowed me to fondle and kiss it to my heart's content ; and followed me about like a dog, for a piece of sugar-cane.

“ And is he really mine, papa ? oh, I never thought I should have such a beauty.”

“ Now you must see his paces : the syce shall ride him by the side of the carriage to-night ; and to-morrow (if you approve) you shall ride him yourself.”

“ I *must* call him Sir Bedivere ; for I have so often longed for a Sir Bedivere of my own : though, if my old friend were here, I could see no beauty in him now,” I said, as I looked at my new favourite, who was cantering along with arched neck and flashing eye, as if conscious of being admired. I was glad to see he had plenty of spirit in him. Indeed, I was so much taken up with Sir Bedivere the Second, that I scarcely heeded where we were going, or the novelties of the place.

CHAPTER III.

SOCIETY assuredly laid a heavy yoke upon us, when she imposed that tyrannical duty of morning visits. I hate unsociability ; but surely there is nothing sociable in the custom. Why might not an exchange of cards suffice ? People who are on such stiff terms of acquaintance, that a call is necessary to keep their friendship alive, do not surely care sufficiently for each other to brave sun, heat, fatigue, and loss of time, to see each other for a few minutes ; both heartily wishing those few minutes over, while they last, and looking upon such formalities as very unmeaning and tiresome. I expressed myself somewhat to this effect, when I found myself alone with my father.

“ The whole morning has been frittered away by attending to visitors.”

A quiet smile stopped me in the middle of my complaints. “ Suppose,” said he, “ seeing it is so irksome to you, my child, that you try and look upon it as a duty—a small, and surely not a very

weighty cross ; which is best borne by taking it up in a kindly spirit. I think that would make it easier, would it not? Indeed, I fear, that in the long hot-weather days, when I am at my office, you will sometimes be glad of even such an interruption as this to the monotony of your life. What shall I do to prevent your feeling dull, Agnes?"

" Oh, papa, I never shall feel dull. Please don't fear that for me. I know I shall be very happy."

" If my poor love could make you so, your cup should always be full and running over ; but now tell me what you thought of all your visitors?"

" Well, I can scarcely remember all, because there were so many, and they came and went so quickly. Let me see ; first there was a sprinkling of officers, of whom I can tell you little more than that they had red coats. Mrs. Scott seemed to know them all very well. Then came another officer, with his wife and daughter—hard to talk to—not an idea in their heads. I was beginning to feel sleepy, when in walked a contrast. A gentleman with a sharp, clever face, and two piercing, bright little eyes that looked through everything, till you almost thought he made holes in what he looked at. He woke me up thoroughly. Began to talk of books and historical characters, and such very literary subjects, that I got frightened, lest he should think me very stupid. I was out of breath

with trying to keep up with him. Happily for me he was interrupted by a lady; such a sweet, gentle creature, papa. I felt as if I were listening to a beautiful air, after puzzling over an exceedingly difficult tune, or drinking a glass of iced water after cayenne pepper. I was so grateful to her, and yet the clever man had amused me. But to return to my lady friend; she looked as if an unkind word had never passed her small sweet mouth. I suppose she is not strictly beautiful; but there is such a calm, soft expression in her blue eyes, and such an elegance in her every movement. She is what I call a perfect lady. I see you are amused at my enthusiastic admiration. I want to see her with her child, she spoke so fondly of him. I can't help thinking she has known trouble, or has some secret sorrow in her lot, for her face is inexpressibly sad at times. Now I'm taking up all your time with this description, and I haven't half done my list. More red coats arrived, and I felt *génée*, because I had an idea that they came to look at me, as the new young lady, and speculate upon the probabilities of my being, or not being, a good dancer. I knew my plainness would disappoint them, and my height would bode ill for my powers of dancing, so I froze up immediately. One more, and I have done. I think I like him. He is not at all handsome, but intelligent

looking ; about twenty-five, I should think. Has a quiet but not shy manner. Not clever, but has sufficient powers of conversation and originality to avoid the threadbare subjects of weather, temperature, and other commonplaces. He actually never asked me how I liked India. He is evidently fond of balls and parties, though his manner is listless, and I think his inclination is to look on the dark and gloomy side of life ; I don't understand him, in fact. And now, dear, patient papa, tell me the names of all these good people."

" Well, I think I can guess all except the first lady and her daughter ; your description of them is not definite. At a glance I recognise your clever friend, Mr. Fawcett ; he is very talented, and knows it, but he is a fine fellow, and does whatever his hand finds to do with all his might. Your gentle heroine is Mrs. Leslie ; she is a very taking person, but I have not seen her often, as they have not been here long. Her husband you shall judge of for yourself. The last of your list is Mr. Champion ; he is also a new arrival, so I cannot help you to unriddle his character, and I do not jump to conclusions so soon as my dear daughter does. Guard against these hasty judgments, Agnes, they are nearly sure to lead you astray. Who was the officer's wife you slurred over so carelessly ? "

“Mrs. Carter.”

“Then I can tell you she is a most excellent person. One who does much good in a quiet unobtrusive way, and though you say, ‘has nothing in her,’ is full of love to her fellow-creatures, and I believe a true and earnest Christian. You have slighted her because she did not arrest your fancy, was not elegant or witty. Oh, my child!”

“Papa, I am ashamed of myself, and will try not to believe so much in my hastily formed opinions. I am afraid I must have appeared uncourteous to her. What shall I do to make up for it?”

“Trust to her charity, she will not judge you harshly; and let me ever be rejoiced by the same ready acknowledgment of error from my beloved child.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE hot weather came on apace. Not gently, as spring blossoms into summer in England, but suddenly, as darkness succeeds light in these tropical climates, where there are no soft dreamy twilights. There was something strange in the stillness and dimness of our large house ;—all superfluous light excluded, the wind sighing through the tatties, and filling the rooms with the cool aromatic scent, which reminded me, in a mysterious way, of that distant far-off fragment of my life, of which confused and broken hints were, as I have said before, suggested to me by sounds, and tastes, and odours. I do not wonder that some have been found to believe in a pre-existent state of the soul. Have not all felt at times a momentary indescribable flash of thought, unconnected with anything in this world ? However, this is not to the point ; I am treating of realities. Three sounds are associated with those quiet hot-weather days,—the creaking of the punkahs, the splash of water on the tatties, and the incessant cooing of the

ring-doves. I would sit with my drawing-board before me, or at my writing-desk or piano, and think myself very busy; while in the next room, or in his hot and crowded kutcherry, sat my father at his real earnest work;—papers piled before him in formidable array, his pen gliding swiftly over the thick sheets of official paper. It was wonderful how he loved that dry work, I thought. And yet there must be a great charm in feeling so much depends on you. Your encouragement and example may do so much; your field of labour is so wide and noble. And then, the result is making itself felt so speedily;—such and such difficulties overcome, and your benevolent plans for the good of your Hindoo brethren being gradually matured and carried into effect. Surely such an earnest worker would be sadly missed? O vain thought! the time must come when you will suddenly be called away; and how will it be then? The stream will flow on as ever. One eddy round the spot from which you have disappeared, just round the spot distinctly visible, and fading away into faint circles further and further. Then the waves will glide on as ever. This is the most that will happen when those whom the world says “will be much missed” are taken. This is too sad and grave a reflection to have in those days interrupted my listless day-dreams; but I think strongly, almost passion-

ately, on the subject now. I have heard fine gentlemen in England, living lives of luxury and comfort, who know nothing of India (the less they know, the more positively they speak), assert, with a smile of contempt, that civilians in India are a set of indolent, arrogant men, well-paid for doing nothing. Is it not enough that so many precious lives are spent and exhausted in that far-off land? all the miseries of climate, and heat, and languor braved, for the sake of a people whom it is so hard to love and bear with? But that all these labours should be laughed at and put down as naught, by those who have no conception what the cost is! I do not say that there are not exceptions to the rule,—that the gold of the deceased Company has occasionally flowed into the pockets of men who have not earned it fairly. There are instances everywhere of individuals who try how little they can do, instead of how much, and who cannot see that they are mocking their Creator, by making light of that precious talent of time entrusted to them. But let men be just, and not so eager to take up an ill-natured cry without calmly considering whether it is truth or falsehood. I must bear my testimony to the hardworking lives of our countrymen in India at the present day. I shall have one or two sore points to touch upon in the course of my narrative.

I was initiated by degrees into the disagreeables of

Indian society. They cannot honestly be passed by. However small an ingredient of that genial and friendly element, they do exist, and so they must be recorded, however unwilling I am to mar the pleasant picture.

In due time I returned the visits mentioned in my last chapter. Mrs. Leslie's lovely boy of four years old quite realized my expectations, and I felt how incomplete the mother's picture had been without the child. He was a bright happy boy, and her eyes followed him in his play with a proud loving look that was touching to observe. Papa had left me to judge for myself of her husband. I soon knew why. He was a selfish, heartless man, somewhat clever,—enough so to make his wife think him a genius. I believe he loved her as much as his heart could, but it was too full of himself to leave much margin for others. Surely he could not willingly have pained the gentle heart that leaned on him so trustingly; and yet I afterwards remarked that he often made the tears start to her eyes, and her sensitive nature shrink, with a rough word or sullen answer. Then she would seem to persuade herself that the fault lay in her own disposition, too exacting in its love. I found it difficult not to show my displeasure, or to listen complacently to the egotistical speeches of the man, who could so under-rate his gentle wife. My

attention would wander to the whispered story of Goody Two Shoes, to which little Herbert Leslie was listening with such delight, while his mother showed him the gay illustrations, to keep him from disturbing papa. I went away happy with her promise that she would soon bring him to spend the day with me.

I will introduce my readers to another lady at our station who was not amongst the callers on the day recorded. She was a contrast to Mrs. Leslie, and yet equally charming. Hers was a bright, genial disposition, which threw a sunny light on a face which was not beautiful in feature. There was a heartiness of manner, too, which was unmistakeably genuine. Her abilities were above the average, and had been cultivated and turned to the very best account. I afterwards learnt the secret of that happy, useful life. Mrs. Raymond's was a heart overflowing with love to God. Her religion was what all religion should be, but what the feebleness and inconsistency of our nature so often fail to make it—outwardly lovely. No gloom, no bigotry, no severity;—that peace of God which passeth all understanding; that joy in believing; that love which casteth out fear, of which many do not taste in this world. Mrs. Leslie's was the attraction of a naturally sweet and amiable temper. Mrs. Raymond's, the more solid and priceless

treasure of a Christian temper. We were not long together before I discovered she was very fond of music. When I returned her visit, I begged her to play to me. I was surprised to find her touch more accurate and brilliant than expressive. However, it was finished of its kind, and I was delighted to listen. When I told papa how much I liked Mrs. Raymond, he was evidently quite satisfied.

“ She is the very friend I should have chosen for my daughter; and I have been waiting, with some anxiety, to see what opinion you would form of her.”

Mrs. Scott and her husband had left us, and moved into a house close by—so close, that it was difficult to find excuses for not going frequently to see her. She meant to be very kind and hospitable; but I should have been glad if she had been less so.

“ Do come, Miss Malcolm, and spend a long day with me; I see so little of you. You must look upon me as an old friend. I have known your dear father so long, we must not be strangers.”

“ It’s very kind of you to say so, Mrs. Scott; but you know I have made a rule never to spend a day from home; so many friends have asked me, that I must be firm to my resolution, or I shall spend a life of idleness.”

“ Why, my dear, you talk as if you had half-a-dozen children to look after. What can you possibly

have to do but amuse yourself? If you are not to enjoy life now—why you never will."

" But I do enjoy it very much. I should be miserable if I were to be idle, and I am not fond of needle-work,—which is almost the only occupation you can carry into society. Besides, I am sure, people get tired of each other before the day is half over."

" Oh, Miss Malcolm, what an ungracious speech!"

" Is it? I didn't mean to be ungracious. I only said what I thought. Tell me, candidly now, if you are not often at a loss what to entertain your guests with?"

" But you don't suppose I ask one person alone. That would be a bad compliment. I promise, if you will come, you shall have plenty of company. I would not condemn you to a tête-à-tête with a stupid old woman like me."

" No, no; I am going to be firm. I will come and take early breakfast with you once or twice a week after my ride."

And so I got out of my difficulty. Papa thought I had done wisely; he did not like the custom, so common in India, of ladies spending the day at each other's houses. It was such utter waste of time; and, besides, Mrs. Scott would certainly ask some of her young military friends too, just to give them a chance of knowing you better.

“ Surely she would do nothing in such flagrant bad taste.”

“ I wouldn’t trust her. She does not recognise the mischief that may arise from this unceremonious intercourse between girls and young men. If you called her a match-maker, she would be shocked. These soft-hearted, well-meaning people, who are not over-gifted with judgment, are easily persuaded to do injudicious things. Suppose some young gentleman of her acquaintance goes to her, and asks, as a particular favour, that she will let him meet such and such a young lady at her house: she cannot refuse; and says to herself—‘ After all, what harm can it do? ’ I am in no hurry to part with you, my darling. It will be difficult enough to give you up with a good grace when your heart is fairly won. I won’t have it taken by stratagem. So, you’re going to be a very busy lady, and get through a great deal of work?”

“ You would call it play, papa; but it is woman’s *work*.”

“ Which should be no contemptible thing. Look at Mrs. Raymond’s life!”

“ Ah; but she has her husband’s regiment to interest her—schools and sick people. I have nothing of that sort. My work is music, and reading, and drawing.”

“ Are you quite sure you have no severer duties?”

“There’s the housekeeping ; I assure you, papa, I find that’s no easy work. In the first place, I can’t speak the language yet ; and I can only just make myself understood, by eking out my broken sentences with gesticulations and stratagems. Then the accounts take me some time ; for I like to keep them neatly.”

“Well, I think you have enough on your hands at present ; but, by-and-by, when these difficulties begin to smoothe down, we will see what else can be done, my dear industrious daughter.”

I was a little disappointed. I expected papa would have been quite satisfied, and proud of my activity of mind. Evidently he had fixed his expectations higher still. What more could I do—was he not a little hard upon me ? I was conscious of the scrutiny of two earnest inquiring eyes.

“Am I hard upon you, my child ?”

I started, and coloured ; for he had guessed my thoughts so truly.

“Did you read that in my face ?”

“Yes ; you must not think me *that*, Agnes. You must forgive me if I have placed my daughter’s standard *very* high.”

Papa often reminded me of Arthur in his way of speaking to me, and dealing with my thoughts —also in his quick apprehension of my character.

They resembled each other in calmness and gentleness; but my father had all the energy and determination that Arthur wanted. Both were actuated by the same deep and abiding sense of God's presence and love to them, which must bring out that family resemblance which all true Christians bear to each other. I had much to tell papa about my English home; and, when I referred so constantly to Arthur, I noticed that his attention became more fixed, and his questions closer and more pressing. When I had related the particulars of the death scene, he was much affected. All that was mysterious and unaccounted for in that violent emotion, which caused the fatal rupture, was then explained to me. That noble-minded Arthur had loved me with a deep and tender love. This he confessed in letters to my father; who, in return for his straightforwardness, had promised he would put no obstacle in the way of his love; provided he never betrayed it, or put foolish romantic thoughts into my head, until such time as I should be old enough to know my own mind. How faithfully he had kept his word, my readers know already. Flora's ill-judged quizzing had opened my eyes to my own dawning love for Arthur; but even then he had been firm to his promise; and with an honourable determination to hide his secret from me, inflicted on himself that fearful trial of self-control

which, in his enfeebled state, had hastened his end. How much of suffering had he saved me by that unselfishness! I taught myself to look upon him as a brother only; one whom death had removed too far, to be thought of with any but such love as we bear to those who have passed into the world of spirits. Dear, noble Arthur!

CHAPTER V.

Now that the hot weather had fairly set in, the Morning Service was held at five o'clock on Sundays, to allow the Europeans to march back to their barracks before the sun became powerful; so that we were at home by seven. I confess the day seemed long to me.

“ Dear papa, do you not feel weary with so many hours of uninterrupted reading? My head seems to get quite confused and stupid, long before the day is over.”

“ No, I cannot say I get weary; but then I have accustomed myself to it for many years. Don't you think, if you varied your subject by changing your book occasionally, you would not find your attention wander so much? ”

“ I don't know. I am afraid I should still find the day long. You see, one cannot take a walk in this weather; and there are no poor to visit, or Sunday-school classes to teach in.”

“ I have no doubt you feel the confinement to the house tedious ; but think a little, if you can devise no plan of making your Sunday a happy, as well as a profitable day. I quite agree with you that your aim is lost if you convert it into a day of penance. ‘ The sabbath shall be called a delight ; ’ but also, it is added, ‘ the holy of the Lord.’ So that we must make it a spiritually happy day. This cannot be attained all at once. I suppose only experienced Christians feel that joy in its services that all earnest minds strive to possess.”

“ Oh, papa ! it grieves me to find how much sooner I become weary of serious occupations than of any other. Is it not a mockery of God, to sit with an open Bible before one, or kneel to pray, and all the while the language of the heart being, ‘ Behold, a weariness is in it.’ ”

“ Of course it is. But then we must not give up our endeavours because we find them hard. If we persevere in a right spirit, joy *will* come. And God does not despise our efforts. Why, only think how small an offering one day in seven is. If we had a right appreciation of all our mercies, we should try how entirely we could devote that day to Him who has so freely given us all things, instead of grudging the few hours taken from this world. Now, my advice to you is,—the moment you find that

tediousness of spirit arise,—take, for a time, some lighter book (not secular); or set yourself some Bible exercise; or refresh yourself with sacred music. I find it a profitable thing to copy out any passage which has struck me in the course of my reading; so that I impress it more strongly on my mind, and also make it ready for instant reference when I may require it again."

Papa's hints were of use to me. I am sure it is our duty to study how bright we may make our Sundays. And yet how many good, excellent people we find who turn it into a day of gloom and silence,—wear a solemn, Sunday face, as if a smile were out of place, and a desecration. I believe much harm is done by all this. The minds of children, especially, are impressed with this unnatural gravity. They puzzle themselves with the problem, "If this is a happy day, why does every one look so solemn?"

I think many people must be struck, on going out to India, with hearing so little about missionary work. From books, and platform speeches, and tracts, I had always entertained the idea that the converting the heathen was the first object of the Christian's life in India. And now that I was in the land of idolatry, surrounded by those who worshipped stocks and stones, it seemed to me that no

one cared or heeded what became of the souls of these black men. I expressed my astonishment to papa.

“ I have been three months in this place. Certainly I have seen one or two missionaries; and you tell me there is a church for native Christians, but except from your lips, papa, I have not heard one word on the subject.”

“ Perhaps, Agnes,” said papa gravely, “ you have heard little, because you have not inquired at all. I confess with shame, however, that as a nation we are lamentably indifferent about missionary work. You see Government will not interfere with the religion of the country, and Government servants follow its example. It is a difficult and painful question. We are forbidden to introduce religious instruction into our Government Schools; so that, in fact, the whole burden of missionary work falls on a sprinkling of men who have devoted themselves to the cause. What wonder that the result is small? Miracles are not wrought in our time; and yet we look for the rapid spread of Christianity, while we refuse any but this meagre assistance.”

“ I wonder how anything is done at all. It must be very disheartening for the missionaries, and yet the good people in England seem to subscribe so largely, and to be so deeply interested in the work.”

“ You have not seen Mr. Hastings yet ; he has been away on a tour, but has now returned, and I hope you will know and appreciate him. I have never seen one more devoted to his Master’s cause. He seems to me to have somewhat the spirit of an apostle. It must require strong faith not to be discouraged by all the apparently insurmountable obstacles.”

“ My chief difficulty, I think, would be to believe in the sincerity of any native. I have come to the conclusion that their instinct is always to tell a lie ; and then, if they find they are likely to gain anything by speaking the truth, they retract the falsehood. I am sure if a native were to tell me he believed the Bible, and wished to be baptised, I could not believe him. Why, papa, my tailor came to me the other day with such a doleful story of how his child had died, and he wanted leave to attend the funeral ; actually shed tears about it ; and, when he saw I was sorry for him, volunteered the how, when, and where ; and a few days afterwards I found out the whole was an invention.”

Papa laughed heartily at my indignation, and said that his servants periodically interred their fathers and mothers, and were in no wise ashamed of being detected.

“ No ; that is the most aggravating part of it. I now live in a chronic state of incredulity.”

A few days afterwards Mr. Hastings called and expressed a desire that we should visit a small school in the city with him, some morning in the course of our ride or drive. We accepted the invitation, and I looked forward with some curiosity to the realisation of what I had so often read and heard about.

CHAPTER VI.

ON the day appointed, papa, Mr. Hastings, and I started on our visit of inspection. I always liked driving through the city. We threaded our way through the tall, narrow streets, thronged with men and women dressed in lively colours. Even the small, dirty shops were curious in my eyes. There sat a fat old bunyeah (corn merchant) weighing out his grain to his customers, and wrangling about the price of the same; a heap of pice and cowries beside him, showing that his trade had prospered that day at least, although large heaps of parched grain and rice still remained to be disposed of. Next the seller of sweetmeats, half obscured by a swarm of flies, settling and fattening on the compounds of glue and butter, and then buzzing, and sticking, and crawling about in all directions. Now a gaudy display of muslin caps, glittering with beads and tinsel, gorgeous slippers and other dandy articles; and then, by way of contrast, the most disgusting of all sights, a

native meat-shop, in front of which are prowling lean, hungry, miserable pariah dogs, longing and looking up at the meat with famished eyes; and above, below, around, about, flies fatter, lazier, and more abundant than their brethren at the sweetmeat shop. We pass all these and many more, and at last stop at a tall, grim building. Here we had to get out of the carriage, and scramble through a small square door in a wooden gate, across a dirty yard, in which were strutting hideous scraggy fowls, with long thick legs, and bodies all out of proportion, bearing no sort of resemblance to the bird recognised by the name of hen. Next, up a flight of steep, broken-down steps, into a low, close room, the walls of which had been painted, but were green with damp, and black with smoke. There was a table in the middle of the room, and on the mantel-piece some would-be ornaments of painted clay or coarse crockery. A few old books, on an old book-shelf, a cane chair or two, and some prints (without frames) of Scripture subjects, defying all rules of proportion and perspective, and very highly coloured. Outside the room was a verandah, from which came a busy hum of young voices. In a minute the teacher joined us. Picture to yourself, gentle reader, a small, thin woman, with a very dark and very plain face, wearing a pink cotton dress; a bright orange shawl, bordered with

green, was pinned tightly over the sunken chest. Papa spoke first.

“Good morning, Mrs. De Silva. We have heard of your school from Mr. Hastings, and he has kindly brought us here this morning. I hope you will let us see your scholars at work.

“Indeed, sir, I shall be very happy, and am most grateful to you for coming. Will you walk into the verandah?”

This was spoken in that peculiar broken English which is vulgarly called “chee-chee”—the *patois* of all East Indians and uneducated people, who have not had the advantage of hearing pure English. It was a strange sight which met our eyes. Boys and girls of ages varying from four to fourteen, and of every shade of colour,—Christians, Hindoos, and Mussulmans side by side. Some with slates, others with books or work;—all taught by that sickly-looking woman and her husband, who was as remarkable and unprepossessing in his appearance as she was. My father began to examine them in their reading and arithmetic. Most could read their Bibles in Urdu or Hindû, some in both characters; and answers to cross questions were given with great readiness—showing that the children had learnt not merely by rote. Some of the smaller boys were especially sharp, and here and there an eager face

bent forward, scarcely able to refrain from answering out of turn. One of the scholars struck me much. She was a tall girl, delicately fair and graceful,—the cleverest there, I thought; never out in her answers. I fancied I saw something like a sneer on the pretty face whenever her companions were at fault.

I had not looked long at her before the thought flashed into my mind, "I should like to teach that girl; she seems so eager to learn, and quite beyond the others. How charming it would be to find myself doing some good and being of use! I will see what papa says."

The examination over, I asked her name.

"Fanny Anthony, miss. I find her very difficult to manage; she is so self-willed and naughty."

This account in no way discouraged me,—my task would be all the more important.

Papa congratulated Mrs. De Silva on the success that attended her efforts.

"It makes me very happy, sir, to hear your good opinion of the children's learning. The school has only been open six months; and now that the weather is so warm, I am obliged to hold it very early in the morning and send the scholars home by ten. In the cold weather we can keep them all day."

“Are your numbers increasing?”

“Oh yes, sir, thank God for it. I have three times as many pupils as when I began.”

“Do you teach them all the Bible?”

“Yes, sir, and the children take them home to prepare their lessons for next day. They told me, at first, that the parents would certainly be angry, and take them away from me; but, except in one or two cases, I have lost none on that account.”

I thought of what papa had told me about the Government prohibition, and looked at him.

“Well,” he said, “we must go home now, as it is getting late. Good-bye, Mrs. De Silva; I wish you all success. Are you in want of money?”

“Not for myself, sir; but I shall feel grateful if you would assist me in giving books. We have very few, and such as we have, kind friends have contributed.”

After writing down the names of those she required, we took leave. I must confess that, although I had been interested, I felt glad to be in the open air again, and away from the dirty children, the noise, and the close room.

“You would like, I am sure, to hear the history of this school,” said Mr. Hastings, addressing papa. “Mrs. De Silva is the wife of a poor writer in one of the offices here. Her health is very feeble; indeed,

I fear, from that incessant cough and emaciated frame, she must be in a decline. God always finds labourers for his harvest; but I don't know who would fill her place if she were taken. She settled in the heart of the city the better to collect her scholars. She receives all of every sect, without accepting payment for her labour. We can little understand what it costs, when her poor body is suffering from pain and exhaustion. I sometimes think when I look at her, 'Yes; we see the toil, and weariness, and misery, and sickness which surround her earthly path; but who can tell the joy, and glory, and endless rest that awaits that humble servant hereafter?' She *must* bear that joy in mind, and have it ever present, or she could not press on so. As it is, she is always bright and cheerful."

How those words sank into my heart! What was my poor, giddy, trifling life? pleasure here and pleasure there; and where was the striving, aye, the agonizing, to enter in at the strait gate? Where were the self-denial and the suffering of the noble woman who, to my miserable sight, seemed insignificant-looking? What would be our respective positions in another world? That little, shrunken figure, in her orange shawl, which I had looked down upon, contained a soul clothed with love to her Saviour, and that ornament of a meek and quiet

spirit, which is, in God's sight, of great price. And what was in my heart? Certainly, at that moment no self-esteem. The lowly example had stirred me out of my self-complacency for a time. Would that such impressions never wore away; but, alas

CHAPTER VII.

I HAVE said that Mr. Hastings' words had impressed me. I will not unsay it. Impressions may appear to be fleeting when they really have left a stamp on the mind which will never be effaced. Years afterwards the facts and words then engraven on the memory will recur to us with the freshness of yesterday. The bread cast upon the waters will be found after many days.

My thoughts were running on the school in the city, and I was making good resolutions of future usefulness, when the door of my sitting-room was opened by papa, who beckoned me into his study. What was he looking so mysterious about?

“Come here and read this, my child,” he said, putting an open letter into my hand. I cannot now recall the phrases, written evidently with care and precision. It was a proposal.

“Well, Agnes, what answer shall I send?”

“Oh, papa, how can you ask? Why, I scarcely know the writer. I have met him at parties where he has warbled his pretty speeches until I had no patience

to listen ; he has called once or twice, and I have occasionally passed and bowed to him in the course of my morning's ride ; and on the strength of this slight acquaintance, he has ventured to risk his life-long happiness. I could not have believed it possible."

" And you have no pity for him ? "

" None, papa. A gentleman ought not to expose himself to the possibility of a refusal. I know some girls give encouragement when they ought not to do so, but my conscience is perfectly clear in this case. Captain Hayward could not for a moment suppose I cared for him."

" Well, I must confess, my child, that even my watchful eyes have detected no flirtation. May you never cause me that pain ! It would make my heart ache indeed to think you could stoop to trifles with a man's best feelings."

" I hope I never shall be guilty of that. But, do you know, I think it is very difficult, bravely and decidedly to give, what is vulgarly called, ' the cold shoulder.' I cannot believe it possible that any woman is so great-minded as to scorn admiration, or hard-hearted enough to be callous to a deep, honest affection. I confess both are so charming to me that I find it hard to steel myself against either. Is it very wrong and weak of me ? "

" Well, Agnes, I don't know what to say ; I should

be sorry to think you so unwomanly as to be heedless of your influence over others ; but, at the same time, beware above all things of the selfishness which would induce you to overlook the feelings of another, in the pleasure of gratifying your love of admiration."

"Papa, there is one gentleman at this station, I find it difficult to keep at his proper distance : not that he is the least familiar ; but although I cannot love him, I like him so well, as unconsciously to be more at home with him than most others ; and as he does not talk the nonsense to me that I know he talks to other girls, but really interests me in what he says, and is, moreover, so very good natured and obliging, I sometimes have to reproach myself with the idea I have been thrown off my assumed guard of reserve, which is always so unnatural to me ; then I make fresh good resolutions to be more careful in future, and he is sure to make me forget them the next time we meet."

"I know who you mean—Mr. Calthorpe. I have not liked to communicate my fancies to you, lest they should be unfounded, but I have felt almost sure that he is losing his heart. He is a thoughtless, merry, good-hearted fellow ; but it is a sad pity to see him live so without purpose as he does ; as if this little life were all, and the great aim were to be pleased and pleasant, and drown dull care."

“ And yet, papa, he speaks so gravely and sensibly at times ; I am sure there is a good heart below that reckless surface, and a yearning for something better and more worthy of a man, than the trifling life he leads. I wonder if I could do him any good.”

“ Try, my child, a woman may do much ; but remember, your task is a nice and difficult one. How can you enter upon deep and serious subjects, without appearing to have more than a common interest in your friend ? ”

I returned to my room, musing thus :—Perhaps here lies my path of usefulness. Mrs. De Silva has her scholars and I have other duties—to exercise a high and good influence on those who love me. Oh, specious reasoning ! oh, subtle woman’s heart ! How cleverly you have found a plausible vent for your vanity ! What a high sounding phrase ! “ Good influence.” No ; that influence will never be good which is not the offspring of a pure motive. Wait one second ; here is a test which you have forgotten to use. See if the gold will stand it. If your motive is truly love to God, to win souls to Christ, and to benefit a fellow-creature, set *your* influence aside. Will you be quite content to see the good done without your agency ? Will there be no jealousy in your heart, if you see another lead your friend to all that is high and noble ?—*your* influence lose its charm,

your smile its magic weight, and some one else hold the power you fancy you now use so well and so wisely? If you cannot bear this scrutiny, you must not venture on your dangerous game. Just now you are deceiving yourself and another. Agnes, do not be a hypocrite!

Did not my heart tell me all this? Yes, faintly perhaps, just at first. But consciences are sad cowards. If we begin to argue, they admit themselves wrong at once; like the sensitive echo, which is turned to discord if we are not content to ask but one question of it. My dear, wise father did not know all the intricacies and weaknesses of woman's heart, or he would at once have negatived the possibility of a young girl's mission being to lead the susceptible souls of her admiring friends. It is given to very few, just starting on the journey of life, to be sufficiently forgetful of self, and zealous for the Lord, to undertake such enterprises, without bringing their own souls into great danger of being lifted up with pride.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE *beau monde* of our station had planned a pleasure-party. A moonlight pic-nic to some celebrated ruins not far off. We (at least the younger members of our society) were looking forward to it as a little epoch in the monotony of hot weather life. We were to drive out to the spot in the cool of the evening, and after making such examination of the ruined building as people feel bound to do on such occasions; there was to be a dance in one of the deserted rooms—band, supper, &c. Oh! desecration of the romantic spot! But we English are sadly barbarous; and the ghost of a deceased Begum could not scare us from our resolution to make merry over the grave where she had slept so many centuries in stately retirement. Mrs. Leslie was to be of our party. “I must bring Herbert,” she said, “for an hour or so. I know he will enjoy it very much, and will give no one trouble; besides, as his papa is engaged elsewhere, it would be dull for my darling at home without us.”

When papa and I arrived at the old ruined tomb, we found most of the guests assembled. It was very pleasant, sauntering through the gardens down the long, straight paved walks, below the level of which were sunk the flower beds. Here a plantain tree, and there the noble, graceful, luxuriant foliage of the tamarind; cypress in their tall, stiff, solemn grandeur, and others less characteristic of oriental scenery; but all affording a grateful and pleasant shade. I took papa's arm, and listened to his minute history of the building. He never forgot a single detail; his was a scrutinising mind; no point, however trivial, escaped his notice. So now, in his own way, he took me round the building, and to the tip-top; drawing my attention to the delicate marble carving and red-stone-chisellings, then down to the very bottom-stair underground. Every secret nook was familiar to him; not to speak of the personal and ancestral history of the old Begum, every word of the inscription on her monument, &c. We then joined a knot of friends who met us, papa soon plunging into official conversation with one of the gentlemen of the party. Dancing was not to take place till the moon had fairly risen; as yet the last faint glow of sunset had not died away. Mrs. Leslie and myself branched off into an avenue of cypress-trees, and began (as ladies know full well *how*) to talk. A pleasant

rambling chat about, it is difficult to say what. Herbert amusing himself the while with decapitating the marigold flowers, with a view to making them into a chain when he got home. By-and-by we passed another knot, amongst whom I recognized my enigma, Mr. Champion.

“What do you think of him?” I said.

“Oh, I like him very much. We know him well. Have you heard that he is engaged to be married? We hear charming accounts of his fiancée. They say she is one in a thousand; and the whole love story is just what I like—a long acquaintance—I mean from early childhood, for they are both young. I am sure those baby-lovers have a wonderful instinct in fixing upon the right objects; they are always so very much in earnest afterwards, and never have anything to find out about each other. Well, there have been difficulties in the way of this marriage. Alice Lennox (that is the young lady’s name) was left an orphan very young, and under the guardianship of a disagreeable, grumpy old uncle, with an equally disagreeable wife, who never allowed Alice to be happy in her own way. I believe the aunt is really a good woman, but so unfortunate in the exterior of her goodness (if you know what I mean) that she never succeeded in winning the affection of Alice. The poor girl was almost led to believe that

her high flowing spirits, and natural gaiety of temper, were enemies to be fought against and conquered, if possible ; so that it is a wonder they have not been quite extinguished. She is not clever, they say, but has a clear judgment and true woman's tact ; with those frank, winning manners which are so charming. She is coming out to be married at the close of the year."

Here Mrs. Leslie's tale was interrupted by Herbert, clamorous for a game of hide and seek. I could not resist his bright look of entreaty, so I ran off with him to find a nook in the place where it was possible mamma might not find him. I had just settled the knotty point and placed him in a safe and secret nook, when Mrs. Leslie came up to hunt for the truant. I don't know that she would have found him quickly, if the little one had kept "as still as a mouse," to use his own words ; but the excitement was too much for his powers of self-control. A merry peal of childish laughter, and a head of yellow clustering curls thrust out of his sombre retreat, betrayed him ; so off he had to run again in quest of another place. "Do, mamma and lady, stay here a minute," he pleaded ; "I will not go far." So we stayed. The band had just struck up a quick march, and all were bending their steps to the dancing-room. We were soon left alone. "And," said Mrs. Leslie, "I must carry off master Herbert, for it is high time he were asleep." I

followed her slowly, when suddenly a cry—shall I ever forget that cry?—rang on my ear. So piercing, oh! so bitter in its agony! I rushed in the direction from whence it had sounded, sick with unformed forebodings. In another moment I had seen all at a glance. There sat Mrs. Leslie with her dead boy in her arms.—Dead, quite dead. Yes, I was sure there was no life in that little form. An unerring instinct told me so. The rosy lips were parted wide, and the blue eyes almost closed, with large round drops hanging on the lashes, which death had stopped ere they fell.

And the mother! Oh, if I could have seen tears in her wild eyes!—they were so fixed and cold. I feared I knew not what. I *could* not speak. She looked up wonderingly, and her voice sounded so strange. “Oh, for water—water! He has fainted, that’s all,” she said, “only fainted. You see, it was a great height to fall from (pointing to the stone-gallery); he was just climbing the last broken stair, when I caught sight of him; and my darling, in his eagerness to hide, lost his footing, and fell all that cruel height. No wonder he has fainted, and my smelling salts are old and useless, or he would have come round long ago.” She went on deliberately: “I have been long intending to buy a new bottle, but you see I forgot, and now my little Herbert suffers

for my carelessness—my own sweet boy, who is my joy and my life—yes,” she said, emphatically, “my life, because I could not live without him.”

My heart sickened. “Mrs. Leslie, I will call papa,” I said, and walked quickly away before she could answer. In a few moments I was by his side. My looks frightened him. “Come, come!” I said; “Mrs. Leslie—her boy is dead; she asks for water to revive him; but, oh, papa, there is no hope, and you must come to her. She looks so wild, and her husband is not here!”

All this time I was dragging him nearer to the spot where I had left mother and child. What need of doctor’s skill?—not for the boy; and who could heal the mother’s heart? She was just as I left her. No one but myself had heard that cry; and I felt thankful strangers had not intruded on that solemn scene. I looked round, imploringly, at my father; and the exquisite compassion of his face, I see before me now. His lips moved, I am sure, in a short and earnest prayer for that sorrowful one before him. He gently touched her shoulder. She gazed fearfully at him. “You must come with me,” he said, “home; you would not keep your Herbert here?” He had touched the right chord. She obeyed mechanically. “May I take your boy?”

“Oh, no; no, thank you—he is better here;” and

she walked on rapidly, though her slight frame shook beneath the burden.

“ How kind of you to fetch me,” she said. “ The air, while we pass quickly through it, will surely bring him round. Oh! it is a long faint—only a faint. Still,” and she shuddered as she murmured the words, as if afraid of them, “ a faint is so like death!” I wondered she did not ask for a doctor, or her husband; but, alas! she had long tutored herself to stand alone in her sorrow; and her mind obeyed the acquired habit even in its paralyzed state. We reached her home. The mother laid the little corpse upon the bed, and then, for the first time, asked if no one had sent for a doctor.

CHAPTER IX.

No, papa had not sent for a doctor, though he did not tell her so ; but an express messenger had been despatched for her husband. He had judged, wisely, that the truth must be broken to her by other than a stranger's lips ; and earnestly trusted that a husband's tenderness might be made the instrument of comfort to the wife. What if the dead child should be the means of winning back the father's love for the mother ? He had left the room to meet and prepare Mr. Leslie for the worst, while I remained with her at her own request ; and so was witness to a scene which was too sacred for a stranger's eye.

After trying in vain every restorative she could think of, the poor mother had been sitting quietly by her child's cot, gently rubbing the white cold hands, and pressing them to her lips. At last she got up, and taking a light carried it to the bedside to examine the little features, in hopes of seeing some change there. Finding none, she set it down again, and,

bending her head still lower, I heard a thrilling whisper; then a louder call when that failed to waken.—“Herbert, my precious one!—Herbert, speak to mamma, Herbert.”

A figure stood beside her, and a deep, deep sob broke upon the stillness of that room. Then came hurried passionate words in answer to that gentle call.

“Oh, Ellen, my wife! do not—do not! you will break my heart. Doubtless our little Herbert hears your voice—he is very near; but we shall not listen to his silver tones on earth again. It seems mockery for me to ask for sympathy from you, my sorrowing wife—you whom I have so often slighted, and who are so good and loving in return for all my selfishness; but do not look so wild. Give me one sweet word, my Ellen—as you loved our precious boy, speak!”

His words had at last thawed that icy calmness, and a deep feeling of thankfulness came over me as I saw she was weeping, and it was her husband who was soothing her. I went out of the room softly, and left the two together. The bright light is breaking through the cloud, I said to myself. Next time I saw the sweet pale face of the bereaved mother, I traced its soft reflection on the saddened features. The grief so tenderly shared, was less hard to bear than the daily, hourly martyrdom of neglect and unkindness

from one who had sworn to love and cherish her, till death should part them.

Mrs. Raymond was much with Mrs. Leslie during this time of sorrow ; imparting many a gleam of comfort from her own secret store, and leading the poor fainting soul to seek strength not her own. A new light was springing up for the guidance of our bereaved friend,—discerned but faintly, and through a mist of tears ; but pure and steady, and ever growing more intense.

Looking back upon the events of that day, they seem too rapid and dream-like for facts. We returned at once to our every-day routine ; there was no vacant place or silent voice in our house ; and I was distressed to find, in consequence, that the sad scene had left so passing an impression on my mind. I am sure it was not from want of sympathy. It is doubtless well and wisely ordered, that time does chase away grief and horror so quickly. How would the work of life proceed if we were to sit and brood over every accident ?

CHAPTER X.

I WAS now looking forward to a visit from May Sherwood. Her parents had yielded to my earnest pleadings, that she might be spared for one month—I longed to see her again; and papa was delighted to think I was to be so happy.

“ You must put forth all your taste and judgment in arranging the room for her reception. I am afraid you will find it very bare. I have exhausted all my ingenuity in preparing your boudoir, my child, and you will not find it difficult to out-do me. Come and tell me what you want.”

Dismissed, by a kiss, on my errand, I began at once the reforms necessary. First, I gave orders that I required the attendance of *kuppra wallahs*; these are men who carry bundles of haberdashery from house to house, as “pedlars” do at home. Wonderful assortments they have in those unwieldy bundles, which are carried suspended from the two ends of a bamboo, slung across one shoulder. The merchant consigns these precious packs to half-clad

menials (whose business in life it is to carry burdens), and walks along in sleek importance at the head of his procession. A very cunning, cringing man he is. Ushered into your presence, down he squats on the floor, having collected his bales around him. He will not be hurried; very deliberately he produces his inferior articles first of all, in hopes of passing them off upon your ignorance; you get impatient; he finds that ruse won't do, and then discovers the right style of article, fixing on it a most exorbitant price. If you do not know how to deal with this crafty man, he will gain his point and wear out your patience. An experienced person will name her own price; of course, the merchant will express unmitigated horror. "Do you wish to ruin him? he is a poor man, has paid so much, and cannot abate a farthing." All this, too, with such earnestness, joined hands, and piteous face, that you may well be taken in. The lady says (or ought to say), "I have made up my mind; but, of course, cannot compel you to injure your prospects; if you cannot let me have it for what I intend giving, take yourself and your bundles away as fast as you can. I have no time to waste in argument." If he is an accomplished rogue, he will begin with hasty and indignant gestures to repack his bales; but observe closely, and you will see your chosen article is kept out to the last, and, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, you will receive it on

your own conditions, if you continue stedfast. It is a good plan (if your nerves will stand the clamour) to summon three or four of these merchants at a time. The competition makes the sale quicker. It was long before I learnt how to manage these troublesome individuals. You must be *au fait* both at right prices and right qualities, before any victory can be gained; they are a strange set. In a grand house they will ask higher prices than in a small bungalow. The truth is, they have more servants to fee. That custom, in India, of giving fees is a heavy yoke; nothing can be done without a douceur. It is a recognised, time-honoured practice, and is consequently submitted to by all.

In a few days I took papa into May's room to see the result of my labours.

"Well, you have done wonders. I did not think this deserted room could smile such a welcome. That handsome silk quilt is an improvement decidedly on the old red cotton one, and the toilet table is a *chef d'œuvre*. The delicate blush suffusing itself through the transparency of the muslin; the pretty white and gold bottles, and above all, those flowers."

"Ah, that is the secret, papa, nothing would look half so well if the flowers were not there. I am so glad you are pleased. I thought the wretched tailors would never have finished all their work."

CHAPTER XI.

THE room was not ready much too soon ; the loud too-toeing of a horn announced the arrival of the traveller, not long after sun-rise, next morning. The horn being sounded more vigorously than harmoniously by the driver of the "dāk gāree," or travelling carriage. Congratulate yourselves, my dear English readers, on your luxurious railway travelling ; you have never felt the 'rattle-jolt of the dāk gāree, or woke up from a confused and muddled attempt at sleep, to find yourself half suffocated with dust, and every limb aching from the uneasy, cramped position in which you have lain all night. A miserable object the poor traveller looks when descending the steps of the gāree. Hair dishevelled, face dust-besmeared, clothes crumpled, not at all fit to be shaken hands with. First the face must be dipped in water, as cold as may be found in the Indian month of June, and the hands washed ; after which we exchange a hearty kiss, and May sits down to discuss a cup of fragrant tea, and collect her scat-

tered wits. We can do nothing without tea in India. It is necessary to have a cup before we rise in the morning, and almost the last thing at night. Having made my friend presentable, I took her to papa's study. It was very pleasant to see my father and my old school friend together; they were at home with each other immediately, having only to appropriate their respective shares of friendship, ready made, through my influence. I was not afraid of either being disappointed in the other.

Perhaps the reader would like to know how we two young ladies spent these hot weather days. Rising at half-past four, we were ready for our morning ride by five. Papa, and May, and I cantered along happily till six, by which time the sun became too powerful to be pleasant, although he was but a little above the horizon. On reaching home we would find tea-cakes, bread and butter, and fruit prepared in the verandah; after discussing these, we dispersed to our own rooms until breakfast time, which was ten o'clock. The hours till luncheon, and from luncheon till sunset, were passed in reading, writing, music, work, drawing, as fancy prompted; only the time must be spent in the house; outside a storm of fierce hot wind was raging, and the cruel, burning sun was riding a triumphant course of glare and deadly scorching heat; so we must keep within

our cool dim rooms. Soon the rains would commence; indeed, we were daily looking and longing for the first fall. Surely *that* would cool the air. There was no refreshment in the evening drive. The air fell on our cheeks like the blast of an oven; still it was cheery to see the faces of our countrymen and countrywomen, and the gay carriages; besides, twice a week there was the band to listen to: the whole "station" would gather round to talk and shake hands, and (least of all) hear the music. When it was fairly dark we went home to dinner, and retired to bed at what would be called an early hour in England, say half-past nine; for we were all, ere that, wearied and very sleepy from the seventeen hours of heat. So passed the hot weather days with us two young ladies. At last down came the long-looked-for rain, hard and fast, with an accompaniment of such thunder and lightning and wind as we had never seen and heard. It was *very* awful, but when the storm had hushed, and only the rain continued softly, sweetly falling, we threw open doors and windows, and stood feasting on the sight. How the dry earth drank it in, and how refreshing was the cool scent of freshly-watered soil! Alas! the next day (as my father prophesied) we were obliged to confess that the hot steam was no improvement on the dry burning wind. How depressing the atmo-

sphere was, so charged with moisture, without air to cool it! I think the rains are far more trying than any period of the Indian climate. It is so difficult bravely to resist that terrible languor and listlessness; just to endure life is all one feels capable of. How can men work on as they do every day, and all day long? and yet they may not bate one effort. That was a source of great wonderment to us, as we sat comfortably, lazily passing our time in the large, cool drawing-room. One morning every house in the station was visited by an orderly, charged with a basket full of neatly written notes, which notes contained invitations to a ball to be given by the regiment. This was a great piece of excitement; and now old, steady heads began to wonder how it was possible for any one to *dance* in such weather. With the inconsistency of youth we felt suddenly inspired with power to undergo any bodily exertion. It would put quicksilver into our veins, shake us out of our lassitude, and other equally logical arguments. I wonder how many hours were spent in consultations about the various dresses to be worn. May and I had still our pretty English stock, but all were not so fortunate, and no woman can submit without a struggle, to the fate of being ill-dressed.

"It will be our turn to contrive by-and-by," I said; "meanwhile it will be amusing to see how the

ladies dress ; and, May, I must confess to watching the progress of various flirtations with great enjoyment. It is very mischievous of me, but I am sure you will say it is great fun. Only one's anger is roused sometimes. It is provoking to see how silly girls can be."

I am tempted to interrupt the conversation for a minute, and meditate on the different kinds of flirts one sees in society. First there is the pretty silly flirt, content with any admirer ; not clever enough to scheme, and yet displaying an increase of flutter and pleasure at the notice of an eligible. So perfectly transparent in her efforts to gain attention, and so recklessly disregardful of her self-respect, that she seems below contempt. And yet such conduct does not often arise from want of heart. One slight experience of real affection, and the little foolish ball-room trifler will settle down into a good devoted wife, who will never think of, or care for, any one but the husband whom mamma has been so anxious to catch for her, and the little olive branches which have sprung up round them. It is the reserved and calculating character that is to be more feared. The young lady of talent or rare beauty, who has set a high price upon herself, and walks into society shrouded in an assumed garb of decorum or volatility, gravity or mirth, goodness or worldliness, whichever

she thinks will be most likely to take at the time. Oh ! how carefully she counts and reckons up the advantages or disadvantages of every match ; how studiously she hides her real feelings of pleasure and disgust, and how cleverly she will devote herself to some poor unsuspecting victim, that she may excite the jealousy of a more backward admirer. These are the girls who need no anxious mother or chaperone to urge them on, and who will never marry for love. Odious, however, as are the characters I have depicted, it is in my mind as odious, and more contemptible, to see a *man* stoop to such meanness—a *man* who has his public work to attend to, and large, broad fields for his energies—to waste them on lady-killing ; to make it his high ambition to be fascinating and irresistible, and to boast that he has broken many good confiding hearts ! I have known one universally liked and courted, because forsooth he laid himself out to be agreeable, and there was that about him which made his task an easy one. He had such a grave earnest way of playing with hearts ; he made his pretty speeches so scarce, and yet so full of meaning, that the snares were all the surer for their skilful laying. Here I will end my digression.

CHAPTER XII.

A BALL-ROOM is certainly a very pretty sight. The gay dresses, brilliant lights, and bright faces. The thick sprinkling of uniforms, in India, add to the liveliness of the *tout ensemble*. It is pleasant to watch the real enjoyment, depicted on the happy faces of young ladies in their teens. Their cheeks glowing, eyes glistening, feet keeping time to the joyous music, and gliding swift or slow as the measure bids. I say feet keeping time ; but there are some cruel exceptions to the rule. All the dancers are not gifted with an ear, and all are not gifted with grace. Why does that infatuated little individual ask that tall lady to be his partner, and start on a perilous voyage round the room, which endangers the safety of both adventurers? See, the lady has torn one flounce nearly off her dress, and is looking cross and unhappy, as well she may ; for it is difficult to bear a heavy stamp upon the foot with sweetness: and, moreover, she knows every one has been laughing at the *gaucherie* of her partner ; and the *gaucherie* of her partner has cast its

ugly shadow upon herself. It is a great pity some kind friend does not give that gentleman a hint to sit still, or at least not to afflict any lady by asking her to dance. And why does that stout elderly matron step out of her ranks? Does she think herself still young and blooming? Good soul! remember, it is twenty years since you were thin and graceful. We all like you very much, and are sorry to see you provoke a smile. I had scarcely time that night to notice anything, for the dances followed each other in rapid succession, and young ladies are too scarce in an Indian ball-room, to sit with folded hands, as many a pretty girl does in England. I had just finished a waltz with Mr. Calthorpe.

“Let us walk in the verandah,” he said; “it is pleasanter there; a degree cooler, and this room is so crowded. Will you come?”

The air outside was certainly charming, soft and balmy. It was a beautiful moonlight, starlight night. Who would not feel romantic at such a time? For some minutes we were both silent. Mr. Calthorpe spoke first.

“Now, Miss Malcolm, this is just the time when I always have my better thoughts. I know you think me desperately wild and silly. Perhaps I am; but do you know I wish I were of some use in the world? It is all very well being good-natured, and a favourite,

but that is only because my time is at every one's service, and I am always at hand to get up a ball, or a race, or a pic-nic, or any spree. Once or twice I have been ill, and found it such terribly dull work, lying sick in bed, wishing to be well again, and able to tear about as usual. If I were to die to-morrow, people would say, 'poor fellow!—how sad!' and there would be an end of it. Somebody else would stretch the ball-room carpeting, send the ladies bouquets, and get up the sky-races."

"Well, but, Mr. Calthorpe, if you do feel and have thought all this, why do you go on doing nothing?

'We can make our lives sublime;
And departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.'

If I were as good as papa is, I might remind you of a noble race we all have to run; a hard battle we must all fight with our own evil hearts; which is occupation not below the highest ambition, a conquest which is glorious enough to engross the valour of the bravest."

"Oh, I want some one to remind me of all this. When you speak thus, Miss Malcolm, you make me bold to break down all reserve. Do not be angry if I am impetuous—I cannot help it. Even if I knew that you would go away and laugh at my weakness, I must brave your ridicule. Women use their influence

cruelly sometimes ; but I do not think you will sport with my feelings. Listen to me patiently—I need not tell you that I love you. You must have seen that written in my face a thousand times. When I am with you I feel wise and calm. I cannot talk the vapid nonsense I am wont to chatter to young ladies. I have felt it useless to try and win you with all the foolish old tricks of pretty flattering speeches, and well arranged bouquets ; but, oh ! I have longed to know how I might make myself worthy of you—I believe that you would stir me up to all that is noble—I should cease to be the trifler, and ——”

“ Mr. Calthorpe, why have you said all this, and obliged me to give you pain ? You make me fear that I have deceived you, when indeed I have been constantly striving to be more cold and distant in my manner. I see my folly now, in fancying I could use my influence for good, without leading you to think I had more than a common interest in you. Will you forgive me my foolish wicked vanity ? No ; don’t answer, or I shall receive some commendation which I don’t deserve. Let us return to the ball-room—you should not have tempted me out here.”

It was late when we reached home, but I begged papa to let me say a few words to him before we parted for the night.

“ Well, my child, what is it ? ”

“ Oh, papa—poor Mr. Calthorpe! You were right in your conjectures. I had a painful task. Poor fellow! he was so much in earnest, and appealed to me to rescue him from his useless life. It was hard to refuse.”

“ Doubtless it was, Agnes; but you know you are not really necessary; there are many others who can give him all the human help of influence that is needful. I should be miserable in giving you to any one who would only look to you for assistance, instead of being a helper as well as a fellow-worker.”

The romance of life was beginning. That most unreal portion of a woman’s history, when her affections have centred in no object, but flutter with uncertain wing, attracted here, and called off again there. It is a strange, not unpleasing, but troubled period. The young hearts have much need of heavenly guidance, that they may not be dazzled by false fair prospects—that they may be enabled soberly, earnestly to choose aright amongst the many paths in which they are invited to walk. Men talk of the lottery of marriage—can it be that such momentous concerns are directed by a whim, or a chance? How can they speak as if the Heavenly Father, who will not let a sparrow fall unheeded to the ground, could forsake his children in such a difficulty? I suppose there are very, very few mar-

riages that do not astonish people. The couple do not seem at all suited to each other—one is too old—another too young—a third is wanting in talent. What can have induced the lady to marry such a stupid, or such an ugly, or such a vulgar man? I am sure she never felt love for that creature. And that charming Mr. So-and-so, after raising every one's expectations, to go and choose that commonplace, silly Miss What's-her-name! What happiness can be in store for him? At all events *they* suit one another in age: but do look at that pretty girl who married Colonel Trotter, a man old enough to be her father. It would be rather curious to see how these marriages would turn out, that the public (who have no interest or concern in either bride or bridegroom) would plan. Why don't people consider how ridiculous it is to take this settling of such affairs in their hands, in utter ignorance of the dispositions, tastes, and peculiarities of the parties concerned? They would not lay down the law so peremptorily if they did.

I believe a girl never meets her mind's hero in real life. If she did, perhaps she would not fall in love with him. How the indispensables are forgotten when the husband-to-be appears! First, the *exterior* of the imaginary gentleman—was he to have light hair or dark?—large features or small?—to be

tall or short? I really forget. I believe I said he must be very clever; but after all I don't know that *that* would make me happy. He would be conceited, full of himself, and look down on me, because I could not follow him in his high flights of genius, and I should have to sit disconsolate, with my bunch of keys and work-basket, until he returned from his soarings.

He was to be much older than I. What a stupid arrangement! Why, in that case, he could never sympathise with my youthful feelings. It is much more romantic and charming to start together, and cheer each other in the fight with the world—hand-in-hand climbing the steep places, and stepping over the large rough stones. Why, my old husband would have stood at the top of the hill, and wondered at my awkwardness; quite forgetting how he had stumbled and panted up the steep sides.

Ah! young lady, when you begin to modify and change your portrait—sobering one tint—brightening another—taking out a light—deepening a shadow—throwing that point into the back ground—and making all so definite and true; you are no longer painting from fancy—you are falling in love!

CHAPTER XIII.

DEAR reader, I will not deny the soft impeachment now, but I should have stoutly denied it then. Women are strange creatures! They are so unwilling to allow themselves captives, that up to the moment of confessing their thraldom, they continue to assert their hearts are free as air. If you wish to discover the real state of their affections, mention the suspected object in a casual way, either depreciatingly or admiringly—the involuntary blush or start will betray them. And so it came to pass, that one day May brought home to me a truth I was struggling to hide from myself. It was done without plan or artifice on her part. Papa said to her (I fancied with a little spice of mischief in his voice),—

“ May, what do you think of Mr. Grey ? ”

“ Well, Mr. Malcolm, I like him well enough; but really he did not strike me particularly one way or another; he seems a gentlemanly, good-natured fellow.”

“ Better say contemptible—detestable, May,” I

suggested in a somewhat unreasonable pet. “ You are wonderfully difficult to please all at once. Why every one speaks well of Mr. Grey ; and to my mind, to say a man is *good-natured* is the severest judgment you can pass, seeing it generally means there is nothing more to say.”

“ Really, Agnes, I had no idea he was a favourite of yours; I know you too well to venture to disparage when that is the case. I confess I answered rather at random. I will bestow more consideration on the gentleman.”

“ Not on *my* account pray, for I never said he was a favourite of mine ; I only stand up for one who is not here to stand up for himself, against the intolerable charge of being a nonentity.”

“ Oh, no ; come, Agnes, I never said that. He ought to be here to witness your zeal in his behalf.”

“ How absurd ! as if it mattered to me what is thought of him ; pray let us speak of some one more interesting.” But, alas ! my retreat was awkwardly conducted, and somehow the conversation would not run smoothly and naturally in another channel. May thought no more of it, but I saw a little anxious cloud settle on my dear father’s face, and I was not at ease.

“ Who was this Mr. Grey ?” I hear my readers ask. It is hard to expect me to describe him—

harder still for me to comply. There was a winning combination of cheerfulness, honesty, manliness, warmth of heart in his character. His manner was particularly gentlemanly, and free from affectation; and his sweet and even temper made him a favourite, as I have said before with every one. Now throw into this composition a strong spice of obstinacy and self-reliance—a *souppon* of conceit—a handful of love of ease and nonchalance—and I think you will realise Mr. Grey. In trying to make my portrait truthful, I may have executed it roughly; but I must have it to the life. Even the little lines and wrinkles become dear to us in a familiar face.

Now, when I add, that I was becoming daily more aware that all the tenderness and love of this kind heart was centered in me; when I saw the undisguised pleasure that beamed in the honest face at the sight of me, or the sound of my voice or music; no silly flattering speeches, but manly, courteous homage, is it to be wondered at that my heart was slowly, surely won? It was so pleasant to find that he liked to come and tell me of all he loved at home—his old father, his brothers, the house where he was born. How he wished to see it again, and feared it would be sadly changed before that time came. There was no doubting or mistrusting that straightforward, transparent character. I have not mentioned him before

but I had known Mr. Grey since my arrival at my father's house. A short acquaintance certainly ; but in India we do not take very long to know each other. Each person's character, circumstances, family, and position are ascertained facts, and, to a certain extent, the general opinion may be implicitly relied on. I have heard it said, "we live in glass houses there;"—as far as man can see into his fellow man's heart, we do. It is this, partly, which makes us less guarded and formal in our approaches to friendship ; we are not afraid of being taken in.

It is, therefore, highly characteristic of an Indian courtship, that it should be brief, and take the public somewhat by surprise. It is often the case, that two people who were on bowing acquaintance a month ago, are now man and wife—all in all to each other. Dear papa used to say—" How strange it is, parent and child are suddenly separated by a third person who steps in, and claims for his own what has belonged to the parent all those long years since the child he has lived and worked for, was born to him ! "

CHAPTER XIV.

MAY's month with us had nearly expired, and papa had promised I should accompany her home, and stay a fortnight with her parents. I was unwilling to leave him, but she pleaded so hard that it seemed ungracious not to make the little sacrifice to repay her generosity in coming to see me so soon. Besides I had not been very well, and a little change was thought desirable. It was but two nights' journey; so it was decided I should go. A circumstance, trifling in itself, will often precipitate (so to speak) a great event; and while my dear father was thinking how he should count the days and hours till I returned; that most unreasonable of mortals, Mr. Grey, had come to the conclusion that *he* should not be able to endure existence for that period, unless he first of all assured himself that I was eventually to be his for better or for worse.

One morning, when papa happened to be detained at home somewhat later than usual, I received a summons to speak to him in the study. Now my road

from the drawing-room (where I was enjoying a *tête-à-tête* with May) to the study, lay through my own little boudoir, as I called it; opening the door of which, to my entire surprise, who should I find, seated in my arm-chair, but Mr. Grey! I am not going to trouble my readers with another love scene; this much I must say, to explain how that gentleman, having first had an interview with my father, had obtained permission to plead his own cause with me, and received encouragement to hope he would meet with success. It was some relief to me to know that papa was not quite unprepared for what I should now have to tell him. We went together into his study—I found no words when I met the inquiring look of those loving eyes. Was I going to leave him so soon, when my presence had been such a joy? Everything but the thought of his loneliness faded from my mind; and I stood before him with quivering lips and eyes brim-full of tears. My own precious father!

“ Am I to give you up, my child? Well, Grey, I must do it with a good grace; but you don’t know what you are asking,—the dearest thing I have on earth. You will be very loving to her,—bear with her faults and failings,—let no breath of unkindness or harshness light upon her. But, oh! above all, I charge you solemnly to look upon her soul as entrusted to your keeping, by One who will require

an account of your stewardship hereafter. This is no trifling engagement on which you have entered. Everything looks bright and easy now; but the romance of love will not last for ever, and the foundation must lie deep and sure.

“Agnes, my child, listen to me. If you wish to please your God, and gladden your father’s heart, you will be such a wife as your beloved mother was to me. Keep your affection pure from selfishness, and let it be sealed with perfect confidence. I shall have many things to say to you, but both your hearts are too full to listen now, and I am not calm enough to utter weighty counsel.”

Taking both our hands in his, he prayed God to bless us, and then, opening wide his arms, folded me in them closely, tenderly, as he had often, often done; but, oh! it seemed to me I had never measured the depth of his great love till then.

“God helping me,” I answered, “my earnest endeavour will be to fulfil all your wishes; but, oh! I am so weak, so inconsistent, that I shall often fail. And when I am impatient, or hasty, or selfish, or wanting in gentleness, as I am sure to be, you must remember, Walter, that in all these instances I am erring from my standard. Don’t let me bring discredit on *that*, however miserably I fall short of my endeavour.”

And thus a solemn seal was set to that momentous little interview, to which I had been summoned so unexpectedly. That last half hour had strangely altered the whole tone and complexion of two lives.

Walter Grey's heart was full of manly pride and pleasure at the thought that he now had the right to claim the love of one who was (please God) to be his wife—no one might come between them. From this day he might feel he no longer stood alone in the world; he had some one to work for, to protect, almost as if she were already quite dependent on him; and then he wished, impatiently, that there were no *almost* in the case, although an hour before all he asked was to be kept in suspense no longer. And Agnes Malcolm's face is very grave with the half realized dream of the morning. Her future is suddenly defined, but she cannot arrange her thoughts, or understand all those new emotions. Although her heart is full of affection and trust, and softened by the joy of knowing how much she is beloved; still she has taken a grave, grave step, and is half frightened: and so she sits all alone in her room, her face buried in her hands, trying to get calm, and pray for help and guidance in her new path.

When I returned to the drawing-room, I found May wondering at my long absence. "Where have you been, Agnes? You look as if something had

happened. Why, you are walking like a somnambulist."

"Am I? Well, I don't wonder. My dear, since I saw you, Mr. Grey has—I mean, I have—promised to be his wife."

The wonderful manner in which I had stated that fact, defying all rules of sense or grammar, was unobserved by May. I might have put it thrice as obscurely, and she would have caught my meaning.

"Did I hear you right? You are engaged to be married! and—and—to Mr. Grey?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, I see it all now! How stupid I have been! My darling Agnes, do forgive me!"

"Forgive you—what for?"

"Why, for my stupid speech the other day. Only to think of my having so unwittingly done the thing of all others I would have avoided, if you had only given me the *slightest* notion how matters stood; and now I know you will think over that thoughtless random speech of mine a hundred times."

"Oh, no! indeed I won't. Besides," I added, drawing myself up, "I have no fear but that, when you know Mr. Grey, you will find out what a very shallow criticism that was, and acknowledge him to be *almost* if not *quite* what he appears in my eyes."

Then began a series of caresses and congratulations,

and fond little speeches, such as one young lady will bestow upon another young lady who is a dear and bosom-friend, on the announcement of such an event as that above recorded. What a fund of conversation was opened !

“ By-the-bye, Agnes,” said May, when even *we* could find little more to discuss, “ I have forgotten to tell you that Mr. Champion’s fiancée, Alice Lennox, has arrived ; and the marriage is to take place immediately. So you see, weddings are the fashion. I entertained Mrs. Leslie, while you entertained Mr. Grey ; and she begged me to give you this news.”

“ I am very glad to hear it, because that poor Mr. Champion has been so tried ; only fancy, an engagement of five years’ standing ! ” And I drew a long sigh at the very notion. My sympathies with lovers were quickened considerably since morning.

CHAPTER XV.

MY engagement (as is the fashion in India) was announced immediately, and I had during the week to endure no small martyrdom in the shape of notes to answer, congratulatory visits to receive, and many quizzical glances. I tried to bear all with fortitude; but really it was almost too much, to have to cover sheet after sheet of note-paper, with remarks on my own prospects and hopes. All Mrs. Scott's calculations were upset by the news. I was not a little delighted at her astonishment, and the defeat of her little match-making schemes for me.

“And pray, Miss Malcolm, when is the wedding to be? and have you decided on your dress?” asked that lady.

“The wedding, I believe, will be three months hence, when Mr. Grey has undergone the coming examination, for which he is working so hard now; and the subject of the dress has not yet been discussed; there's lots of time for all that, you see.”

“Well, I don't know, my dear. I would not put

the matter off, for boxes are a long time on their road from Calcutta sometimes, and fifty things might happen. Why, at this time of year the whole trousseau might arrive a mass of mildew, and then what would you do?"

"Certainly not send down to Calcutta again for it. We have very tolerable shops here; and, if the worst comes to the worst, my tailor should make the dress."

"Oh, Miss Malcolm! you must be joking; that would never do. Pray, send for the things at once."

"Very well," I said, laughing at her earnestness; "I will see about it."

So May and I began to put our wise womanly heads together, and all the respective merits of glacé silk, brocaded silk, and moire antique, were being considered, when dear papa interrupted us.

"I am going to ask to be allowed to fix what the dress shall be. Your mother wore white satin on her wedding-day, and I want my Agnes to let me see her in the same. It is a silly fancy, perhaps, but I should like it gratified. And now, my child, come with me: I have one or two other whims, which I know you will enter into."

I followed him into his room. Opening a drawer, he took out a small box which fastened with a patent lock. He put the key into my hand.

"My dream is about to be fulfilled. For nineteen

years I have kept these precious relics by me, fondly hoping that, though I could never see them worn by her to whom they were given, God might in his love and mercy spare my child to me, and that some day I might put these trinkets into her hands, and say, 'These were your mother's.'

Yes ; there they lay, in their little velvet beds ; the wedding gifts. Threads of costly pearls, with here and there a glittering clasp of diamonds, glistening like tears amongst them. My father took them out with trembling hands ; first raised them to his lips, and then, one by one, he decked me in them.

" I must not murmur ; but oh, it all comes back so fresh ! so fresh ! How proud she was of them, and how her soft bright eyes danced with pleasure when she saw what I had brought for her. The only gems she ever coveted, she said,—how had I guessed so cleverly ? And then, Agnes, I made some foolish lover's speech, about their being so like her ; so gentle and so innocent looking, and the diamonds sparkling with fun and laughter like her bright self. Which pleased her most, the thought or the jewels ?—she was but seventeen."

And the memory of that day came upon the great loving heart with such a torrent of tenderness, that his eyes filled with tears, and his voice was too broken for words. It was a very solemn and sacred

grief for a daughter to witness. The burst of emotion lasted but a little while, and as I stroked his hand, and fondly kissed his cheek and forehead, his face regained its calm sweetness. We then talked together of many things. He told me of all the useful and pretty gifts he wished to contribute towards my housekeeping, and how he had ordered a carriage, and was making inquiries for a pair of horses suitable for the same. Was there anything I could or would suggest?

"Oh, nothing, dear papa; there is no end to the expense I am to you. It is bad enough to rob you of myself, without making quite a beggar of you."

"But I am very, very happy in lavishing on you all that can add to your comfort and happiness; and though I may miss you, and be selfish enough to long for your presence, you will not be far off; and if I am called away, I shall have no anxiety about your future. That may be very soon. My powers are not what they were. I am not what men call old; work and climate have told upon me. I hope I am not idle, but at times I long for rest; and the work that was a pleasure once, seems a mountain which I cannot climb, and weighs upon my spirits. All these facts, which I cannot conceal from myself, are messengers from my great Master to tell me the eventide is fast approaching. I think I shall die in harness;

but, oh! it little matters, so that I be found faithful at the last. There is a rest — ”

“ Hush, dear papa ; how can I bear to think of losing you ? Not yet, when we have but just met after all these years of separation. What makes you think of death just now ; you are not ill ? ”

“ No, darling ; don’t look so sad and anxious. We Christians must not shut out the thought, ‘ Watch ye, for ye know not the day nor the hour.’ What do we mean by praying daily for the coming of Christ’s kingdom, if the idea of eternity is dreadful to us ? ”

“ Papa, I cannot talk of my wedding and your death at the same moment. It may be weak and superstitious of me, but my heart sinks down, down, I don’t know where. Hard as it seemed before to leave you for a fortnight, I now begin to think it impossible, and one of the things I had to ask you about was connected with the journey to Agra.”

“ Out with it, then. I will not say another word that might make you gloomy ; but I don’t like to see you so easily terrified. I must hope that this is caused by physical and not mental weakness. I shall welcome back a brave, calm-minded daughter, with a little more colour in her cheeks, and a capacity for mutton chops and beer,” he added, laughing. “ What can I expect from a girl who has been living

on water-ices, and soup, for the last two months? So now to the subject of the trip to Agra. How I wish I could go with you and see your delight at the Taj Mahal, the Fort, Motee Musjid, &c."

"I wish you could, indeed. I know you will say I am not half *up* in the history of all these different places when I come back. I shall have overlooked just the very choicest pieces of carving, and mounted the wrong minaret, and forgotten the name of somebody's grandfather, who was a connecting link of the most vital importance."

"You impudent puss, I have been talking to you long enough I see. I will lay your dák this very evening; and mind all your finery must be packed into one box and one imperial, so that May may have her fair share of luggage. No overladen carriage shall start from my house. You ladies are so merciless. In the days of palkee travelling I have seen strange sights. The top of the conveyance piled up with every description of box, bag, and basket, and inside packed so closely into the bargain, that the lady had barely room for her feet; and then complaining of the length of time they were on the road, and how the bearers would stop and smoke their bubble-bubbles. I am going to bring you into a proper state of discipline, so beware; don't attempt at the last to smuggle in a bundle or a

ponderous dressing case, or it will be ruthlessly extracted."

The packing was performed to papa's entire satisfaction. I did not exceed my allowance of luggage, and when the "dāk-garee" came round to the door, May and I both expressed unbounded admiration at all the natty contrivances for comfort which he had busied himself in planning and carrying out. First, the carriage was well chosen; large, and roomy, with wheels in good order, and tolerably closely shutting doors and windows; a small travelling lamp, fastened inside, in a spot where it would not be in danger of being knocked down. In a similar position was suspended a metal "serai" for water; and the net depending from the roof of the carriage was well stocked with tea, sugar, a loaf, in which an excavation had been made to receive a dainty pat of butter (the hollowed crust with which it was covered serving to keep it from air and dust), a ham, bottle of wine, cold fowl, a case of biscuits, and half a-dozen ripe mangoes. No bad fare for two young ladies spending a day at a dāk bungalow. The ayah and table attendant having disposed themselves somewhere, as only natives can, we are said to be ready for our start. I express some fears that the khitmudgar will come rattling down from the top of the carriage as soon as he falls asleep, but papa laughs and assures

me, for my consolation, that the man expresses entire satisfaction at the comfortable berth ; he has spread his "rosai" at the top of the imperials, enveloped himself in a white sheet, and in two minutes will be sound asleep. "Good bye, my child—God bless you, and send you safe to me again. Write every day."

The sun had set and the darkness was coming on apace, when we started ; so when I turned to look back, his tall figure was dimly visible. He was standing in the road ; how still and spirit-like he seemed ! The bats were flitting with their rapid butterfly motion, backwards, forwards, and in circles through the dusky air, and away in the distance sounded the unearthly cry of the jackals. How shall I describe that sound to those who have not heard it ? Papa told me that, when I was a tiny child, I used to run and cling sobbing to him for protection, when I heard the jackals. To this day I feel a strange terror when the first wail commences the wild chorus which I know will follow. It always awoke me, however low and distant, like the voice of an evil spirit. "Where, where, where !" it said, as if searching for some dead thing on which to feed and fatten ; and then another would answer, "Here, here, here !" and finally, all would combine in a wild and fiendish exultation at the discovery of the carrion prize.

“May,” I said, “doesn’t that make your blood run cold? Look, there they are, stealing along the ravine—four, five, six, how horrible! and those bats *will* fly between us and the moon. Let us shut the window, and talk of something cheering, for I confess I feel very miserable.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE bungalow we spent the next day at was the most comfortable I had seen. Having our own servants with us was a great luxury ; for on arrival at these halting places, it is no small labour to have to unpack one's boxes and dress oneself. The sitting-room boasted a tattie, but in the rainy season those contrivances are of no avail, so we had to content ourselves with a punkah, and found the temperature very tolerable. The only interruptions to the monotony of the day were the occasional blast of a dāk gari horn—and in the afternoon a tremendous storm of thunder, lightning, and hail. Flash on flash, and the loud rolling of the thunder. How unprotected we felt in that slight building, when the wind came rushing across the plain with such fearful force, and nothing to arrest it ! The carriage outside was whirled round like a feather, and wheeled away to some distance. We thought the roof would

surely be blown off, and sat trembling at the sight and sound of so much fury. At such moments, we seem to realize the presence of God in a peculiar manner. To have some faint and feeble notion of His Almighty power, and our own nothingness. But the sun shines out again, the earth looks up smiling, and we forget immediately how terrible the past hour has been.

“I am glad it is over, Agnes.”

“Yes; although we know we are safe in God's keeping even when those messengers of death are darting through the air, it is impossible to feel indifferent to the danger.”

“I think it is meant to make us solemn. I don't like to hear people talking and laughing as usual while the storm is passing overhead. The Hindostanee idiom for thunder is, to my mind, most expressive, ‘The heavens are speaking.’”

“Yes; He sends out his voice, and that a mighty voice!”

We next recorded our names in the travellers' book, and amused ourselves with reading the various remarks, made by discontented, or vulgar, or jocose, or well satisfied people; here and there the remarks being enlivened by illustrations,—portraits, of anything but a flattering nature (being the artist's ideal), of any writer who by incautious remarks had laid

himself open to satire. 'We made our comments in as curt and simple a style as possible ; then rousing both our servants, who were of course sound asleep in the verandah, dispatched one to make tea, and the other to pack our boxes. We were soon ready for our start. Next morning early I was on the qui vive for the first glimpse of the Taj Mahal, which papa told me I should obtain before we crossed the bridge of boats. What a flat, dreary, desert country it was ! A few palm-trees here and there ; but deep, rugged ravines as far as eye could reach. Suddenly in the horizon (or rather between us and the horizon) appeared a fairy-like vision of exquisite proportions, pearl-white, gleaming through the haze. Was it a cloud ? Surely nothing so exquisite, so pure-looking, could be the work of mortal hands. But the mist cleared gradually away, and then the dome and the delicate minarets stood clearly out from the bright blue sky. "How very glorious it is, May ! How little I thought what a sight we were to see this morning !"

"And look there, Agnes ! that must be the Fort. How grand and sober it is in contrast ; and, peeping above the solemn red walls, is a miniature Taj. What a gem ! "

One more turn of the road, and we came in sight of the full broad river, which the heavy rains had brought up to its greatest height. The picturesque

cotton-boats, gliding gracefully down the stream, apparently so motionless,—

“ Broad, and deep, and still as time ;
Seeming still, yet still in motion,
Tending onward to the ocean.”

and reflecting all the beauties of the fair buildings, springing from its banks. Not only those I have mentioned, but many others, quite in ruins, of the same deep rich red as the walls of the Fort, and enveloped in shrouds of vivid green ; for at that season the creepers are in full leaf, and throw their graceful drapery over the departed glories of these crumbling monuments. After threading our way for some time through the picturesque streets of the city, we came to the uncouth bungalows, and straggling untidy enclosures, which constitute the civil lines of Agra ; and, stopping at one of these, found ourselves at May’s home, and welcomed very warmly by May’s mother. India has its many drawbacks of vile climate and painful separations, and languor of spirits consequent on these ; but, oh ! recommend me to the warmth and cordiality which one meets with everywhere in that land of exile ! It is no small alleviation of the evils we have to endure. There was no ice to break in that house. I felt I had been received into the hearts as well as the house of Mr. and Mrs. Sher-

wood. True I was their child's dearest friend, and the daughter of an old and valued friend; but I thought I must be even more than that, before the day was over. There was a letter from my father on my table, and a sweet little drop of refreshment it was. How was it I had ever felt the want of something to say when I could only write twice a month? When (having parted from him but a few hours) it seemed to me I could cover sheets on sheets with ease. I leave my readers to solve the problem, for they must all have felt the same a thousand times.

The wonders of Agra did not disappoint me on nearer inspection. One by one we visited those buildings, the distant view of which had filled me with such delight and surprise. It was impossible to say under which aspect the Taj Mahal was the most beautiful. The sun revealed all the marvels of curious inlaying and minute carving, and the moon invested that pearly edifice with such a robe of romance and unreality that, as we stood and gazed, it seemed as if the whole would melt away into the night-air, and prove to be some Arabian-tale creation of our fancy. And deeper and deeper, closer and closer, fell the shades of solemn mysticism, as, entering the low marble portal, we stood in the interior. Above loomed the vast dome, from the centre of which, suspended by a long cord, hung vibrating the ostrich-

egg (emblem of eastern dominion). A feeble light placed here and there, revealed the exquisite screen of marble tracery, within which were placed the jewelled monuments to the memory of the great emperor Shan Jehan and his wife. The walls are now slightly discoloured by the breath of time, but the thick gloom conceals those lesser defects, and all is in lovely harmony. The footfalls have been creating a strange commotion in that silent spot! *Silent*, did I say? Why, it seems no sound is ever lost there; faint, ghost-like whispers wander round and round. Now let us wake the sweet echo. One chord is sung.—Hark! ten thousand voices have caught it up above. Surely it is not in stones or marble, to produce such a flood of harmony? It is startling to hear one's own voice so spiritualized, so perfected. Do not stir or utter any exclamation or sigh of delight, lest you interrupt that delicate chain of melodious pulsations, stretching out to the far, far future, or back into the ages past, as fancy suggests. It was very difficult to tear oneself away from such dream-land, and wander back to the common places of a thatched bungalow. Wise people shake their heads, and prophesy that that fair building will not last many years; that in the cavities of those blocks of marble, tons of water are noiselessly undermining and doing their work of ruin. Some day (not very

distant), the Taj Mahal will be a tale of the past. Ah, well! I feel thankful that I have been permitted to see that vision of beauty. I pity those who never will. All other eastern models of architecture seem nothing in comparison.

CHAPTER XVII.

EVERY morning, my dear May (whose delight was to give pleasure) brought me a double dose of happiness, in the shape of letters from my father and Mr. Grey; and sometimes she would indulge in mischievous remarks and questions, as to which was most welcome; withholding one or other, and tantalizing me in various ways. I never would read either till I was quite alone. One day she put a single envelope into my hand, and when I pleaded for its fellow, instead of joking me, looked rather grave, and said, "That is really all I have for you to-day, Agnes."

"Impossible! Why, papa can never have allowed a day to pass without writing. Something must be the matter." And a terrible feeling of dread came over me. Hastily opening Mr. Grey's letter, I learnt that my dear father was ill; and, though he feared his not writing might alarm me, it was thought right that he should keep quiet, and allow some one to send a line in his stead.

"May, I must go at once. Where is your father?—

Can I speak to him ? My dāk must be laid without delay. Oh ! why did I leave him ? ”

No arguments were used to dissuade me. Mr. Sherwood, seeing my intense anxiety, hastened all the preparations for my journey ; but, making utmost speed, it was impossible I could leave till the evening. All tried to comfort and re-assure me ; but nothing could dispel the conviction that danger was near, when that loving hand was forbidden to send even a message of affection. It was a day of terrible suspense. As the light was fading and I was in my room, preparing for the journey, I fancied I heard the sound of horses' hoofs, cantering quickly up the road to the house. My senses all seemed sharpened by anxiety. I ran to the front-door, and who should prove to be the rider but Mr. Grey. Wearied and exhausted he looked, and his eyes so haggard and sad ! Evidently he had ridden far and fast. Men do not ride thus in India on a light errand, merely to catch one glimpse of their lady-love. There was no smile of pleasure, and when my eye met his, he looked away.

“ How is papa ? ” I asked, in a distant, far-off voice, not like my own.

“ Come in here ; there is no one in this room ; I wish to be alone with you.”

He could not hide the truth ; although, with all

the tenderness of a woman, he strove to break it gently, and to ward off the weight of that great blow, by interposing all the love of his heart.

I had been an orphan since yesterday—I, who had woken that morning so full of happiness, while that beloved head was pillow'd in death—those sweet eyes closed on this world for ever.

I listened to the whole tale like one in a dream; only I remember a sort of cry of pain escaped me now and then. It was better I should hear all, before awaking to the reality of what had happened. Had I never known the reason of my being sent to Agra?—why he would not listen to my entreaties to remain with him? Cholera had broken out with fearful violence in our station; and while he did not dread the enemy that crossed his path of duty, thought it right to shield his child from it, if possible.

“I was with him when the sickness first seized him,” Mr. Grey said; “he knew at once that he would die, but was so calm, so ready to go. In the intervals of agony, which did not last long, thank God! he expressed in a few low words his firm faith and joyful hopes. ‘Tell my child we shall meet in heaven; I know and am persuaded my prayers for her will be answered.’ He told me where to find all his papers, and what he wished regarding his funeral, and bequeathed you to me with his last breath.”

But I must go at once, and look on him once more. Ah, I forgot! Yes, even that sad pleasure was denied me—the grave already contained those dear remains! Truly death is terrible outwardly, when, as in this instance, not only is it sudden in its attack, but, ere we have time to realise our loss, we are forced in fearful haste to bury our dead out of sight. There is no time to summon distant friends.

Anxious to anticipate the post, and distrustful of the haste that would be made were the sad message conveyed by the mounted police (who are always employed in urgent cases), Mr. Grey had ridden all that weary distance, scarcely resting on the road, mounting whatever horse he could get. No wonder he was worn and haggard.

I cannot dwell on those first days of bereavement. Words fall so short of what we feel and suffer; and, alas! there are so few in this evil world, who do not know all, and need no telling. The few who do not, will find no echo in their untutored hearts to the sad note; and so let me be silent and pass over those days of weeping, and trouble-haunted nights.

I returned to our old home, only to take a farewell of it. Dear kind Mrs. Raymond received me into her house, and every day I went about my errand of emptying those rooms, in which I had been, oh! so happy. No dear voice of welcome greeted me as I

entered—surely he must be somewhere. I could not but think that I should see him sitting in the study-chair. Oh, how desolate that room was! There were all his little treasures of many years ago, which he would never throw away. The picture of his wife and child, gazing at me from the wall, as they had often gazed at him. The chair and foot-stool pushed a little on one side, as his dear foot had probably misplaced it when he last rose. The letters last received (mine amongst them), and several still unopened which had come too late. All office papers are removed. The public work cannot stand still, and some one else has taken *his* share. (Did he not tell me he should die in harness?) That cushion on the sofa! I can still see where the head pressed it. Let me kneel down and rest mine there, while I pray for help to bear this; and try from my heart to thank God that his servant departed this life in His faith and fear, and to overlook my loss in his unspeakable gain.

Now that I have seen the old place as it was, let them remove all trace of his living self. Henceforth I must think of him as a disembodied spirit, resting from his labours, and all these bring him back to me too vividly as he was.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I SHALL re-introduce myself to my readers as Agnes Grey. My position during the time that elapsed between my father's death and our marriage, was a painful one. If the affection and thoughtful solicitude of dear friends, on whom I had no claim, could have made me forget it, I should have had no anxiety in being dependent on their hospitality; but it is impossible not to feel acutely the being thrown on the kindness of comparative strangers, encroaching on the privacy of their home, and engrossing more of their time and attention than they would feel called upon to devote to a member of their own family.

Mrs. Raymond, with happy tact, treated me with as little ceremony as she could, that I might feel more at home; and I soon loved her so much, that I seemed as if we had known each other all our lives, and I had constantly to remind myself I did not belong to her. At last Mr. Grey ventured to urge that our marriage should not be longer postponed. It had been my father's wish, he said, that I should not, out of a

fanciful delicacy, delay to give myself to one who had the right to protect me. The wedding need be no merry-making. The ceremony in itself was solemn and grave enough, and all the festive accompaniments should be omitted. I could not but admit the truth of this reasoning, and when my father's dying wish was united with Mr. Grey's earnest pleading, I felt I ought to comply. So, early one morning, in the presence of Colonel and Mrs. Raymond, and the Leslie's, I took upon me the solemn vows which made me a wife. Ah! how I yearned for my father's blessing on that day! As I put on the dress he had chosen and ordered, and the necklace he loved so well, I thought how fondly he would have looked at me, all decked in that bridal attire. We were to go up to the hills for our honey-moon. Mr. Grey was entitled to one month's holiday in the year, and no month could have been better than October for our visit to the Himalayahs. What climate so perfect in the world as that Himalayan autumn? We were well repaid for the three days' journey to the foot of the hills, that most unromantic commencement of a wedding-tour. Then for the first time I experienced all the miseries of palkee travelling. If I had felt inclined to grumble at the jolting and the rattling of the dák-garee, what did I think of the shake, shake, shaking of the palkee? The incessant,

confusing, monotonous mumble of the bearers, the offensive odour of the torch, fed with copious anointing of rank oil, and which the torch-bearer, with all the obstinacy and wrong-headedness of his race, *would* carry on the windward side, half choking me with the detestable smoke ; and no speed to make up for all these torments ; a miserable three-and-a-half or four miles an hour. At the end of each eight miles stage, bump down goes the palkee. I put my dust bepowdered head out into the night-air, and asked my husband to explain the cause of such rough treatment. He had also been bumped down within a few paces of me, and looked no handsomer or cleaner than I did. He explained that here we changed bearers ; those shouts were calls for some delinquent who was not true to time, and his companions, only too glad of an excuse to dawdle, had squatted round and lit their hubble-bubbles.

What a road we had come over ! No wonder it should be considered necessary to take to palkees. Since we had crossed the Ganges and entered the precincts of Rohilkund, we had bid farewell to civilization ; but it was a fair and beautiful country, so green, and wooded, and undulating, after the arid plains of the Dooab. Large shady groves of mangoes dotted here and there, and the soft feathery foliage of the graceful bamboo. During the second

night of palkee-jolting we passed through the belt of forest which skirts the foot of the Rohilcund hill-boundary. How wild it was! What tangled luxuriance of creepers, covered with gorgeous flowers, flinging their wild arms from tree to tree; and the thick undergrowth of brushwood and jungle grass, affording such shelter for the wild inhabitants of the forest. We had been so shut in all night, that we could only see the jungle on each side of us, and at times were brushed roughly through the thorny bushes encroaching on the road. But by sunrise the dense forest was passed, and close before us towered the hills of the lower range. How cheering was the sight! Here we bid adieu to our dismal palkees. Having refreshed ourselves with breakfast, we started afresh; my husband on a small, sturdy hill-pony, and myself on a sedan-chair, or "janpan," as they called it. All our property was divided amongst a group of coolies, who had been sent down the hill for the purpose. An ugly set they were, with Chinese-cut eyes, and of short stature, but far livelier, and laughter-loving, than their grave brethren of the plains. It is remarkable, in passing through an Indian town or village, how very rarely one hears the sounds of mirth or enjoyment. The gravity of the Bengalees amounts to melancholy, and light-heartedness is a quality unknown south of the hill-country. It did

one's heart good, to see a black face at last lit up with the real enjoyment of a joke.

"The rogues," said Walter; "they are determined to make the most of our small amount of luggage. Look at that fellow, getting out of sight as fast as he can, with nothing but a small basket, which I verily believe we emptied of its last contents yesterday."

The delinquent was stopped and brought back, and the fair amount of men were hired for the occasion, heads counted, and the number written down. It was well this precaution was taken, for when we had to pay these men, about twice the original number presented themselves; and then we found that as fast as they received their wages, and were turned out of one gate, they made their entrance by another, and took their chance of being recognised. They bore the discovery of their fraud with great good nature, and got well laughed at by the rest, who were less venturesome.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ascent to Nainee Tāl took about five hours. As the summit of each peak was gained, another appeared towering high above. It made one very dizzy to look down the steep precipices. Once or twice I shut my eyes when the road became very narrow, for the men who bore the janpan, being accustomed to such paths, carried me with the greatest nonchalance to the very brink of the chasm, or took a short cut up a precipitous bank, tilting the small box in which I was sitting without (it seemed to me) the slightest regard to my safety; and my husband's pony (wretched animal!) kept me on the verge of distraction, spite of all Walter could say about his sureness of foot and experience. Barring these detractions, the enjoyment of that morning was perfect. Our eyes feasted on that glorious beauty; we looked back on the dreary plains, from which a dense steam of heat was rising, with pity for the good people we had left behind, and self-gratulation on our good fortune. The trees were fringed, from root to topmost bough, with long pendant

ferns ; some like green feathers, others like long green ribands fan-shaped, serrated—numberless varieties. Here and there cascades dashed down the rocky sides of the mountains, and wandered murmuring across our road.

“ Do you see those sombre-looking rhododendrons, Agnes ? People tell me that in March and April they are in blossom, and the hills one blush of crimson ; how beautiful that must be ! ”

“ Yes, I should like to be here ; but I can fancy nothing more exquisite than this ; I can’t find words of my own, but I keep incessantly repeating,—

‘ These are thy glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty !
Thine this universal frame, thus wondrous fair ;
Thyself how wondrous then—unspeakable ! ’ ”

Although it was near the end of the season, but few of those who had taken refuge in the hills from the heat of the plains, had commenced making preparations for their return. One or two houses, however, had been made vacant by the departure of wives, anxious to rejoin their poor solitary husbands as early as they safely might ; so that we were fortunate enough to find snug quarters ready for us, and in the drawing-room actually a bright fire burning.

“ How home-like it looks, darling,” said my husband ; “ and now for the first time since our marriage I feel settled and comfortable, and able to realize all

the dignity of having a wife. Why, I feel ten years older, and very much more important in my own eyes, whatever I may seem in yours ; eh, wifie ? ”

“ I am quite strange yet to my share of dignity ; I feel half afraid of you ; but very fond, and not a little proud. I shall probably not answer for some time to come to my new name of Mrs. Grey, and several letters from my pen will be signed Agnes Malcolm, I suspect. Now *you* have no small difficulties of that sort to overcome. Your life is only shorn of a great many little cares and perplexities, such as account keeping, letter writing, ordering dinner, &c. ; and all these are heaped on your wife, who has, into the bargain, to lose sight of her former identity.”

“ And you are afraid of me ? How is *that* possible, brave hearted young lady that you are ? ”

“ Well, don’t you know what I mean ? Although we are everything in the world to each other, we are still so far strangers, that we have yet to find out the peculiarities of each other’s tempers and dispositions. I may roughly tread on one of your mental corns without being aware of its existence. Hitherto we have been lovers ; not *really* fancying each other perfect, but surrounded by such a halo of romance, that even faults and blemishes were tinted with a most blinding *couleur de rose* : now, my dear Walter, we have entered on the reality of married life ; you

will, of course, very soon cease to play the lover; and though I shall be quite persuaded that I am becoming more necessary to you every day, and (unless I am greatly mistaken) engrossing more and more of your heart, I shall miss all the lover-like ways and looks. I know I shall, because I am but a woman; and perhaps I shall pout and feel aggrieved, if you forget to kiss me before you go to Kutcherry, or if you wish to dine at the mess, or go out hunting, instead of taking me for a drive; and fifty other absurdities. All that will come smooth in a few months, and we shall be very happy."

"So you think it necessary to go through this certain amount of misunderstanding first; why, if the honey-moon is not to be a happy time, what *will*? *I* don't ask for anything better."

"Well, I suppose I am unromantic on that point; but I always fancied that the first six months of one's married life must be the least happy, and, at all events, it is pleasant to think we are to be *increasingly* happy. Now I have philosophised enough; I must be off and unpack, and put things straight."

"I bargain for one thing. While this month's holiday lasts, I am going to enjoy life thoroughly, and ramble about these lovely hills without a thought of work or duty; then I must make up my mind to settle down again more industriously than ever, and

get myself a good reputation, for wife's sake as well as my own."

This determination was acted up to. Day after day we spent in exploring the beauties of the place, sometimes being rewarded for a long climb by a glorious view of the snowy range ; those lofty peaks, snow-capped since the creation, only revealed when the atmosphere was clear.

I can recall those early morning-hours so vividly ; the hours spent in gazing on that wonderful panorama —so very still, and awful in its intense beauty. At our feet, the grass and flowers bathed in heavy dew ; before us, a vast sea of hills, those in the foreground rich with vivid green and the warmer colours of the crimson creeper. There, a cloud would cast a broad belt of shadow, which would again be relieved by a bright gleam of sunlight on the next eminence. Sharpness of outline and distinctness of colour, all fading and melting by degrees into a soft blue grey ; and then, beyond all, the snowy range ! so pure, so solemn ; out of reach of all the storms of earth ; when hid from mortal eyes, still bathed in the undimmed light of the sun. How small we feel ! what nothings on God's earth, when we look out on such a scene as that ! and yet all shall pass away, and the soul, contained in that minute and perishable body, exist for ever and ever !

In the evenings we would take a water-excursion on the lake. A pretty lake, lying as it does in a basin of hills ; but small, and not much thought of by those who have seen the European lakes. We were not difficult to please, however, and were well satisfied with such a finish to the picture.

There was an echo, and a smuggler's rock, and a sad tale of shipwreck, all complete. Down in the caverns and recesses, which the quiet waters hid from our view, and which were so deep that they had not been fathomed, lay the wreck of a pretty little skiff, which was sucked down one bright sunshiny morning, when the wind was high, and the poor fellow who owned it had been too venturesome in putting out sail. The little skiff capsized, and, being of iron, did not right herself ; so, before help from shore could reach her, both, the vessel and its owner, were dragged into the depth below ; and neither cord, nor mast, nor spar ever drifted upwards to the lake's surface. The body was often and patiently dragged for, but never recovered. So the lake had its mournful legends, though many years had not elapsed since it was first discovered, and fixed upon as a suitable centre-piece to the small town which has since sprung up around it. By the side of the lake is the promenade or walk, as it is called, and in the afternoon it is gay with the rank and fashion of the

place. No carriages or wheeled conveyances of any sort find their way up those hills, but there is always a curious variety of sedan-chairs, in wood or cane-work; and a still lighter and stronger species of chair or litter—what shall I call it?—for the “hill-dandy” consists merely of a piece of stout cloth, slung by straps to a single pole, whilst a broad band of canvass forms a rest for the back. Some ingenuity is required to get into this dandy, which only adjusts itself into shape when the bearers have lifted the pole on to their shoulders, and the occupier has taken her seat. She is carried sideways, and it is wonderful how rapidly the bearers get over the ground, relieving each other when necessary. Thus do the Nainee Tāl ladies take their airing; when a level road is reached, it is easy to get out of these dandies and walk. Some of the *beau monde* are on horse, or rather pony back, for most people are afraid to peril the necks and knees of valuable Arabs in such precipitous places, and a good hill-pony may really be ridden without reins. It is indeed safer to let them pick their own way, without attempt at guidance. Soon after sunset a cold wind begins to blow, and then the people flock to their houses, to escape the unkindly influence of the damp air.

CHAPTER XX.

WE had not been many days in our temporary mountain home, when my husband received a letter, with the large official seal of the Secretariat Office, which threw us into no small state of excitement. The letter contained the announcement that he was appointed to one of the Rohilcund stations. By the same post came a note from Mr. Champion, who, by the way, was a Haileybury friend of my husband's :—

MY DEAR GREY,

Congratulate yourself, and me, for we are both ordered to the same station—a very nice one, I hear: lots of shooting to be had in the district. Our wives will now have an opportunity of becoming friends. When there are only a handful of Europeans at a station, they must stand all the closer to each other, and cultivate good fellowship. I hope

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you are as happy as I am. I cannot find a better wish for you.

Yours truly,
E. CHAMPION.

“ Well, dearie, what do you think of it? ” I said.
“ Why, I hardly know yet. Just at first it seems a bother to have to pack up and move, when I had got the house into such order, and have been longing to see you in it for the last three months. But then, again, we are lucky in getting to such a favourite station ; and it will be very jolly having Champion and his wife there. It won’t be quite like going amongst strangers. I hope the magistrate is a pleasant fellow to work under, and that the regiment is a nice one.”

Discussing all the pros and cons, in the willing-to-be-pleased frame of mind proper to newly-married couples, the pros soon gained an immense preponderance ; and ere long we had come to the conclusion that Government had acted in a most friendly and considerate manner, in appointing Mr. Walter Grey Assistant-Magistrate in that particular district. A weighty amount of business had now to be settled ; and Mr. Champion’s letter was answered as follows,—Walter writing and Agnes prompting, so that both should have a share in the production :—

MY DEAR CHAMPION,

All right. I'm game for anything, being not merely as happy, but a great deal happier than any one else on earth can be. (I must inform my readers these two first sentences were *not* mine.) Now, there's a good fellow, choose a nice house for me as soon as you get to our station. Let me know if servants are to be found there. Tell me what sort of a trap we shall want to go about in; how you like the collector and officers, &c. You will be off immediately, I suppose. I am allowed a month to join, so I shall stay out my time here, and then go back to my old quarters, and start off all my things.

Yours,

W. G.

I may as well continue the correspondence. A week afterwards, came the following answer:—

MY DEAR G.,

Arrived here yesterday, and, like a true friend, lost no time. In the evening, my wife and self inspected the empty houses. There are only two, one the size of half a nut-shell; so you have no choice, and we are saved responsibility. The bungalow is dreary-looking—empty as it is—but well planned, and has a pretty garden. This is a charming place, and the people sociable and nice. Such

a picturesque little church and clergyman complete—which is not often the case at small stations. Mrs. Champion begs her love to Mrs. Grey, and says she has a presentiment we are going to be very happy.

Yours,

E. C.

This was cheering ; and now we wondered there had ever been any *cons* in the matter—they had melted away so instantly. At last the time came to say good-bye to the lovely hills, and our romantic walks, rides, and rambles, and to go back into the working world, with a good stock of energy and determination to do our duty in our station, God helping us.

Fast we jogged and jolted back to our starting-point ; but instead of settling down, at once set about the despatch of all our goods and chattels. Well it was that some of our cases still remained unpacked in the verandah. What a collection of carts we had to make ; and what a noise and hubbub there was ! Natives can do nothing without making a tremendous fuss and chatter. Tell them to move a piece of furniture from one room to another, and in two minutes a swarm of men with naked brown legs have settled on the article in question, and are shouting and encouraging each other as if to some

great work ; whereas two men might easily accomplish what a dozen are putting their hands to, and exerting their lungs about. It is hopeless to expect them to listen to your entreaties for less noise. One by one the hackaries (carts) are laden, the bullocks yoked into them, after a vast amount of abuse and tail-twisting from the drivers, and then they file off : each cart carrying, besides its allotted portion of luggage, one, two, or more women (wives of the men-servants in your establishment), and whole colonies of children, whose faces are peering out from every gap and space between the packages. It is a marvel they are not made pancakes of by the rough jolting of the unwieldy carts. The fond husbands and fathers escort the hackaries on foot. They will travel about ten miles a-day—so must be started in good time. What utter misery and discomfort this would appear to the eyes of English servants ! Fancy starting a house establishment, for a journey from London to Carlisle, in rough carts with creaking wooden wheels, which are to be their houses by day, and beds by night ; the cooking of the food to be performed by the roadside, and materials to be purchased at each halting-place ! Certainly natives have no grand ideas. A man will start on foot with a bundle on his back, and arrive at any given place at any given time. On the highways are numberless

vehicles of various kinds, literally crammed with human beings. How they dispose of their limbs and bodies in such a tiny space, or how they escape the agonies of cramp, we know not. At all events they look well satisfied, as if they had all the room they required; and as long as they are pleased we need not pity them.

I was very sorry to take leave of all my kind friends,—the Raymonds, Leslie, and Scotts; associated as they were with my beloved father's memory, and the happy days I had spent in my first Indian home. I had a love for the place too; but perhaps it was as well that I should leave it for a time, so as more completely to shake off the deep sadness which the sight of all the familiar haunts awakened, now that he who used to frequent them was no longer in the accustomed places. Kind Mrs. Scott was very sorry to lose me, she said, and I felt I hardly deserved to be regretted by her; but when it came to actually taking leave, I forgot all her silliness and love of gossip, and really felt grateful for the interest she had always taken in me, although it had been tinged with a little love of match-making. She had known my father long, and certainly had a great regard for him. Mrs. Leslie was a friend of my own making. Our intercourse had been always pleasant, and our love cemented by the sad scenes of

her trial, described earlier in my tale. But from dear Mrs. Raymond, my comforter in sorrow, my gentle counsellor, and my guide to all that was true and good; my pattern of a happy, consistent, Christian woman, it was hardest of all to part. She could not but shed around her that lovely light which was the secret of her life. There was no hope of having her near us; as no European regiment was ever sent to such a small station, and she could ill be spared from her labours of love amongst the wives and children of the soldiers; so that I could hardly be selfish enough to wish her to gratify me by a visit at the expense of their comfort.

“ You must be brave, and make up your mind to a great deal of this parting in India,” she said. “ It is one of the trials, consequent on the incessant shifting and changing of society. Why perhaps, two years hence, hardly one of the present set will be here, Agnes.”

“ It is enough to deter one from making friends at all,” I answered. “ I think I shall be wise, and keep on distant terms with every one.”

“ I am not the least afraid of your acting up to that; Alice Champion, or any one equally charming, would take your heart by storm very speedily. Why, *you* would never be able to exist without some one great friend, I prophesy.”

“ I believe not, but I am out of heart, and inclined to be morose. After all, what nonsense it is. Why Mrs. Raymond, I am independent of friendships now, for I intend to act up to dear papa’s advice, and hide no corner of my heart from my husband ; and do you know, he is willing to listen, and take an interest in everything—even my letters from May Sherwood and my schoolfellows. It must be very provoking and inimical to all confidence, to find one’s husband indifferent to all these minor topics of interest.” Mrs. Raymond quite agreed with me.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. AND MRS. CHAMPION would not hear of our going to an empty house ; we must take up our abode with them till our own bungalow was in apple-pie order. For Mr. Champion said, " unless my friend Grey is very much changed since we were at College together, he would be utterly miserable in the midst of confusion."

The energetic little wife of our kind host had tried to make the empty house look its best. It was thoroughly clean, and the new druggets down in every room ; I believe she had assisted to nail them with her own white dainty hands. It only wanted furniture and inhabitants. The carts had arrived before us, and the work of unloading was being carried on, as noisily and vigorously as the lading had been.

I must describe my new home : the house stood in a good sized enclosure, part of which was devoted to a flower and vegetable garden. It was raised several feet from the ground, and had a thatch which looked

a great deal too large for it. A coming-down-over-the-eyes sort of appearance. A verandah ran round three sides of the house, and was filled up here and there with trellis-work, over which climbed a creeper with a pretty scarlet blossom. Like the generality of bungalows, it was one-storied. The drawing and dining-room were in one, but an arch midway marked the boundary of each. The look-out was pretty into the garden, bounded by a bamboo hedge. The stable and servants' houses were some distance from the house; the kitchen premises midway. There was a well most conveniently situated for the watering of the garden. In fact, we came to the conclusion that we would not exchange bungalows with any one in the place.

In three days the rooms were all fitted up to our perfect satisfaction. My natty husband had decorated the hall with long spears, bows, arrows, shields, daggers, whips, and other articles; and our drawing-room was pronounced quite English looking, which was the highest compliment that could be paid, seeing that all the softening graces of carpets, curtains, and paper on the walls were wanting, and tell-tale hooks fastened to the ceiling spoke of the time when punkahs would be required. Thanks to kind friends, we had many pretty vases and ornaments, wedding gifts, towards the setting up house. I have

a theory, that all these little elegancies around one, have an insensible influence on the mind. The eye is pleased with forms and colours, and the impression is conveyed to the brain by a mysterious process, which we cannot understand, but cannot deny.

Admitting this, why should we think, it matters not whether our rooms have but the bare necessaries of furniture—ill-matched, clothed in dingy chintz and damask, which wages an incessant war of disagreement with paper and carpet—or whether taste and judgment are exercised in producing a cheerful and harmonious *tout ensemble*? We do not consider what effect these small things have on mind, and even temper.

“ I flatter myself, dear Walter, our chintz is perfection—cool-looking and bright at the same time ; and the pale buff colour of the walls is in good keeping with both green leaves and crimson berries. That grey marble table refreshes the eye, and sets off the Parian statuette, gilt inkstand, and basket of flowers.”

“ Yes ; I don’t think we can do anything more. It does look charming. I agree with Mrs. Champion in thinking we are all going to be very happy ; something tells me so ; and I am sure it will be our own faults if we are not. Why, so few people have all they want ; and if anybody were to say to me—‘ I

should like to give you a present, Grey—what will you have?' Upon my word I should not know what to answer. Come into the garden and I will show you the place I have fixed upon for our early morning breakfast. I will have a 'semianah' pitched at once."

A "semianah," dear reader, is a canvas canopy, raised on stout wooden poles and secured by ropes and pegs to the ground, as a tent would be. On the windward side is a screen of canvas. In fine weather, when the sun is not too powerful, or the wind too cutting, it is a pleasanter place of rendezvous than a tent would be, and is frequently used by civilians in camp to hold kutcherry in. Our semianah was often afterwards the scene of friendly gatherings ; from half-past six to eight o'clock, while the mornings were cool and fresh, we sat out enjoying a chat-tea, fruit, bread and butter, cakes, &c. This was the leisure time of day with all, and there was a total absence of stiffness in these open air meetings. The favourite dogs of the different guests would follow their masters' heels, and sit expectant of scraps ; and our pet horses would be brought for inspection, Sir Bedivere receiving many a stick of sugar-cane or slice of bread. There were other pets ; deer, large or small, who would walk in and out, with stately tread and haughty look, sometimes poking their noses into

the very plates, and abstracting any dainty or scrap of paper they might chance to find. Our letters and envelopes would occasionally meet with untimely ends in this manner. I must not omit to mention the impudent rascally crows—sitting watching us with knowing eyes. Shameless birds, as long as a gun or pellet-bow is not in sight; but call to your servant for either of these articles, and the crows will vanish like a dream. I have seen a gentleman sit watching his opportunity, a small hard lump of lime-stone on one hand, and a crust of bread on the other; take up the crust, and the crows stood their ground boldly; touch the stone, and off they flew. Surely the Indian crow is not quite a canny bird.

When the hot weather came on, we were obliged to hold our *chota hazarees* (little breakfasts) in the verandah of the house; but we gave up the semianah with regret.

I think I must say something about Mrs. Champion, as she will be henceforward one of my principal characters. What a bewitching, fascinating little thing the lady Alice was! Small and slight, with well-rounded figure, rich-brown glossy hair, merry grey eyes, small full mouth, nose *slightly retroussé*, just enough to give her face a *soupçon* of impertinence and mischief. Dainty little hands and feet. Warm-hearted, clever, thoughtless, brave physically and

mentally, quick tempered, wilful, full of fun and spirits ; very impulsive, and a responsible charge for any one to have committed to their trust, but capable of great things, if a gentle influence were exercised over her. She might say or do fifty things no one else could do, who had not her amount of tact and pretty winning way. It was impossible to be angry, however much you might disapprove. How proud and fond her husband was of her, and she loved him well and truly ; but I could not help wishing she would not quiz or tease him, at times, almost as if he were a child. "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband," I thought. We shall see how it fared with this interesting couple. Mr. Champion I *have* described. I had now good opportunity to unriddle my enigma, and analyse all the ingredients of a character which, though not without strong faults, was very fine and admirable.



CHAPTER XXII.

MAY SHERWOOD had put me in possession of some letters, which I wrote to her about this time, and which I think will give a truer and more detailed account of my early married life, than my memory could furnish ; so I shall transcribe them in order.

MY DARLING MAY,

Now that we are quite settled in our new quarters, I must relieve my mind by a long written chat with you. I have a hundred things to say. Where shall I begin ? The house and grounds I have already described ; so, on that head, I will only remark that the interior of our dwelling is now a *chef d'œuvre*. We have accomplished our work of furnishing and arranging with consummate skill. I say this to you in confidence ; you will not think me more conceited than I really am. The society here is delightful. Walter's lord and master, the collector, the kindest of men, gives every one under him an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and then does not grudge the proper meed of praise, which is a great encouragement to young officers. Walter has

plenty of work and responsibility, which suits him remarkably well ; for if he has a fault it is being too self-confident. After all that is no stumbling-block, except to humility. Mr. Champion, who (as you know) occupies a higher post than my husband, is wanting in this quality, and is consequently frequently embarrassed by a want of reliance on himself, which must be painful and very perplexing, seeing that he cannot trust his native subordinates. Moreover, he is intensely conscientious, and wears himself out with anxiety, as to whether he has decided rightly after all. Now Walter says, ‘ I do my very best; put forth all my judgment: what more can I do ? It is useless tormenting myself afterwards, when I know I have spared no pains.’ This is a happy frame of mind ; but, my dear May, if I were a magistrate in this country, what *should* I do ? I have not the slightest confidence or belief in any native. Falsehood is engrained in their nature. If half-a-dozen witnesses swear white’s white, and another half-a-dozen swear white’s black by all that’s holy—what can a judge do ? I am thankful *I* have no cases to try. You will forgive my numberless digressions. The sight of my letter-weighing machine reminds me I shall ruin myself. When the Penny postage is introduced I shall be more reckless. Of the beauty of this station you *must* come and judge for yourself.

In some parts it is like an English park. The grass so green and level, and large trees dotted here and there. The church is happily situated for showing itself off, and is more like a village church at home than any I have seen out here—only it wants ivy, and a chime of bells. A miserable gong summons us to service. There is an harmonium, which has been shut up since the bachelor clergyman came to reside here. I play it now, and our singing is very fair. Several of the officers are musical, two or three of them kindly assist in the choir, as I call it ; but the choir, May, is small, very small ; Alice Champion has a sweet soprano voice, so she leads ; I take the second, in which Walter joins when he can, for he has not often time to learn his part. Our other singers are Mr. Hudson, lieutenant, and Mr. James, ensign, in the regiment here. I drill them during the week in tenor and bass, and they bear most good-naturedly any amount of scolding and repetition. Some of the drummers have expressed a desire to join the singing class, and I think it right to encourage them ; but, oh ! I foresee that all harmony will be marred. They have no notion of music, and their voices have far too much of the nasal twang to be pleasant.

I am ashamed to say I have seen but little of our clergyman. He is very quiet and shy, melancholy looking, and I suspect, very delicate. I can't help

wishing he were more energetic, and had a greater influence with his flock, but that is not given to all; and I believe him to be good and earnest, though *not* a Mr. Hastings.

We are the most sociable set of people in the world; all on excellent terms, and as yet I have seen nothing of the jealousies and uncomfortable misunderstandings which I know to exist in most large Indian circles. As to that vulgar nonsense of Civilians *versus* Military, I am thankful to say we ignore it, and I hope we always shall. What absurdity it is, May! Why, the two services are so related to each other: one brother will be in one, and another in the other. Father a colonel, son an assistant magistrate, and so on. All a matter of accident, too, and dependent on the humour of directors, or the amount of skill shown in the pleading for appointments; so that it seems the more incomprehensible. By and by, when the competition system is introduced, which I suppose it will be, the civilians will have some grounds for conceit and self-satisfaction. At present they cannot have. Their pay is certainly high, but think of the work. Now, as I tell our young friends in the regiment, if you will only work with your heart, and pass your examinations with éclat, you will in all probability get a staff appointment, and bid farewell to small pay. I think it is

the idle ones, who won't read, that are the most discontented; but we have not many such here. Most have some hobby as a resource; either drawing, or photography, or reading. Their regimental work cannot take up much of their time; and I pity all who have no resources.

There is one good-hearted man in this regiment, who excites my utmost commiseration. His wish seems to be to kill time, indeed, he confesses as much; and really I don't know what he does. Alas! he makes a boast of sleeping away some hours, and smoking others, playing at billiards, &c. He is ready to die of ennui at times; longs for excitement, of which we have none here. And yet he is so amusing and pleasant a companion, and has such good abilities, if he would only improve them, that it makes one's heart ache to see him lead such a life. Mr. Calthorpe would be just such another at a small station, where he had no balls or races to get up.

Alice and I are, of course, much together during the absence of our husbands at office, and our houses are within three minutes' walking distance. She is fond of reading and music, very intelligent and quick; but I sometimes wish she would *think* a little more. She is younger than myself in many ways, though not in years, and I am so accustomed to older

friends, that I don't know what to think of this reversal of the order of things. I sadly miss the help and guidance of a decided Christian character, such as dear Mrs. Raymond's. All undeserving as I am, I find myself constantly referred to, as an experienced person in religious matters, and I am unfit for the position. It seems hypocritical even to appear to have a title to such distinction, yet I do not seek it. My precious father little knew how soon I should be placed in these difficulties. No wonder much is expected of his daughter. Oh, may some small portion of his spirit rest upon me! The prayers of such a righteous man must be answered; and Walter tells me how assured he was that they would be, when lying on his death-bed, and seeing all things in the light of a dawning eternity. Now I must compel myself to end my letter; you must not expect to hear from me again for a whole fortnight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I HAVE been firm to my resolution, and now I may reward myself by another outpouring. I have been in a peck of house-keeping troubles since I wrote. These native servants, May, will drive me mad. It struck me one day that I would compare notes with an experienced lady manager, the wife of the Major, who, having lived many years in India, and had to contrive on small means, would be a first-rate authority. Oh, pity me ! in what an atmosphere of dishonesty and unwitting extravagance did I find I had been living ! Paying half as much again for the self-same meat, and bread, and other necessaries supplied to the other ladies of our station ; giving twice as much for wood and charcoal, as my next door neighbour (who has half-a-dozen children) ever allows to her khansamah (chef-de-cuisine). In short, I need scarcely say, that I went home in a state of righteous indignation hardly to be conceived, except by those who know how much I take *everything* to heart. Walter was most provoking, *would*

not be roused to wrath, said that he did not see anything to fret about, as he was living much cheaper than he had ever done before, and twice as comfortably ; as if that was any comfort to me. I took the matter in my own hands, and with the best Hindostanee I could muster, informed each one of my servants severally, that I was going to start on a new system, and did not intend henceforth to pay more than my neighbours, and a great deal more, which I considered severe and to the point. What has been the result ? the servants have given warning, and although I am not at all sorry to get rid of such a miserable set, I fear I shall find some difficulty in getting substitutes. However, I won't despair. I must relate one or two anecdotes which will amuse you, but at the same time show you how very anxious I am to have everything nice, and what are my difficulties. My ambition is to see nice plump fowls on my table. Well, I laid in a stock of feathered creatures, ugly enough to look at, but good of their kind, I was told. Not trusting the man in whose charge they were, I had them cooped up under my bedroom-window, and fed before me, with rice crumbs and other good things from the table. Surely no fatter fowls than mine would be seen on any table. Vain delusion ; they were thin and scraggy as before. Evidently there was false dealing somewhere ; my fat

and well-cherished fowls were doubtless exchanged for miserable poultry from the bazaar, and all my pains and trouble only served to enrich the rogue of a khansamah. I revolved the matter in my mind, and hit upon what I thought was a most clever device ; the khansamah should be outwitted. Round the neck of each of my fowls, I would tie a thread of English sewing silk, sufficiently short to prevent its being cut and re-tied on to the neck of another fowl, and such sewing silk was not to be purchased in a native bazaar. Alice, Mr. Champion, and Walter, were laughing spectators of the scene. I, seated in grave dignity, fastened the gordian knot round the necks of these frightened, noisy birds ; the native looking on with stolid face, holding the struggling victims while the operation was performed. A weight was off my mind when it was all over. My hour of defeat was at hand. Not long after, the man in charge of the poultry came with joined hands, and made the following statement—"Nourisher of the poor, the fowls are all choking over their food, being unable to swallow by reason of the thread round their necks ; will your highness give an order that the strings shall be cut ?" My dear May, you will laugh as much as I did at my short-sightedness. I had quite forgotten to take into calculation that the crows would enlarge when the grain was

swallowed. I have now determined to trouble myself no more in the matter, but pay according to the size of the fowl brought to table,—a much simpler plan. When I told Alice of my defeat, she said, “Never mind, worse things have happened to me. I was gravely informed by my servant the other day, that the *crows* had walked off with two of my fattest hens. I had to pocket the insult to my understanding, for I could not command my countenance sufficiently to scold the wretch.” This story is as good as mine in a different way. I ask myself, “Why do you distress yourself so about what is inevitable? peace of mind is worth any amount of rupees.” Of course it is, but at present my strong conviction is, that every iota of the money earned by my dear husband’s hard work, it is right to spend profitably, but not to squander.

We are going into camp again almost immediately. The collector will be in the district the whole of the cold weather, and so Walter and Mr. Champion will take it by turns to remain in the station, and take care of the Treasury. We expect to enjoy our gipsy life very much. My next letter will probably be dated from some unheard-of place in the wilds of Rohilcund.

Ever yours,

A. G.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I AM all in love, dearest May, with our nomadic life. That is to say, for two or three months of the year I should thoroughly enjoy it. After which, I would prefer home and quiet again; for it is difficult to settle down to any grave occupation under present circumstances. We do not travel every day,—sometimes the camp stands for nearly a week, if there is much work to be done in any place. This is not a pretty part of the district. By and by we hope to see the country at the foot of the hills, and perhaps some tiger shooting. What fun that would be! All the sport I have witnessed as yet, has been alligator and other river shooting. We spent some hours one day in the following manner:—Having engaged a country boat (such a clumsy, heavy-looking thing), we packed into it, ourselves, some provisions, guns, powder and shot, umbrellas, servants, and all, and started down the stream. Mr. Champion and Alice rode and drove out to our camp, in the early morning, as it was a kutcherry holiday, and he could be spared: so, with the

addition of one or two of the officers, we were a merry party. An awning was put up for us ladies, under which we sat with our books and work—except when any alligators came in sight. Then the excitement became great. Not a sound must be uttered, or the great unsightly-looking animals would scuttle into the water in a moment, although they lay basking in the sunshine like logs of wood, apparently fast asleep. As we neared them the oars were shipped; down crouched the gentlemen, keeping only their eyes above the level of the boat, and the muzzles of their guns up, ready for action as soon as the alligators were within range of shot. Then bang, bang, bang, as fast as they could. We ladies felt quite blood-thirsty, and were every bit as disappointed as the gentlemen, when any of these monsters got off either unhurt or only wounded; for, I must tell you, they can accommodate a number of bullets in various parts of their bodies, without being in anywise hindered from making their escape. Even when hit in a vital part, they take a good long time to die. The great thing is to maim them, so that they cannot make off. One huge fellow, while being captured by the boatmen, was making very ugly demonstrations with his jaws, and I became so irate at his impertinence, that I was imploring one of the gentlemen to give him another bullet. “Won’t somebody shoot him?” Don’t

be shocked at what I am going to tell you, May. One of the party mischievously placed a rifle in my hand, bidding *me* fire. We were close to the alligator, so it was no feat; but I did fire, and hit my friend close to the jaw, which stopped his snapping. I was so delighted, and the rest of the company much amused. Really, these creatures are so ill-looking and mischievous one can't feel pity for them. Whether it was hard-hearted of me or not, I leave you to decide, but I could look on unmoved at their dying tortures, as they lay at the bottom of the boat. Their movements were so slow and snake-like, that they did not speak of pain. The other victims I did feel very sorry for, birds of all sorts, ducks, teal, wild geese, curlew, and some handsome tortoises—one actually laid five large transparent-looking eggs, after it had been brought into the boat to all appearance dead.

The river was very low, and we were incessantly sticking on sand-banks; then all the boatmen would turn out into the water (I believe they are amphibious), and with much ado, set us afloat again, by pushing the boat round with their shoulders. As this happened some thirty or forty times, in the course of a few miles, I need not say we made small progress; and the motion of the boat as it swung round and round was anything but pleasant. Once or twice we passed funeral piles, on which bodies were being

burnt. This was but a tributary of the Ganges ; but as a tributary, holy in its way ; and so they cast the ashes of their dead, or (if they cannot afford to burn), the bodies of their dead into the stream, and one is subject to see horrible sights while passing down the river. We have preserved the skins of our alligators, and intend hanging them up in our verandah as trophies. Some of our good friends in England would open their eyes if they heard of my exploit, would they not ? But I must tell you of another adventure of mine, which was far more trying to the nerves, *my* nerves at least, and of which I shall often think, as a romance in its way. A shooting party from our station had in their rambles wandered over the border of the district into Oude, where they heard there was good sport. Their accounts of success tempted Walter to get leave to join them for two days, and our collector kindly gave permission. We were to send on our tents and follow in the afternoon. I took it into my head for some reason, that I should like to try travelling in my little hill sedan-chair, as the roads were infamous ; in fact, there was no road at all, and we should have a miserably rough drive, and not even a pleasant ride, if we went on horseback. The two small rivers were little more than deep ditches, and might be easily waded by the coolies, who carried the "dandy ;" so it was agreed I should

give the thing a trial. We had some twelve miles to go—that ought not to have taken more than three hours—so Walter said I had better start at two ; he would leave me a mounted escort, and be off early, so as to join the shooting party, before they left their camp. This sounded well. I ordered my bearers at the time appointed, but the wretched creatures did not make their appearance till an hour later. I never dreamt of being deceived in the weather, so did not encumber myself with an umbrella. Throwing a light shawl over my head as a protection from the sun, I took out my book, and soon became absorbed in its contents, my only companion being a small rough terrier of dear Walter's, that has become very devoted to me. When I first looked up from my book, it struck me that the sky was looking very black ; this was an hour after I had left. I remarked to the coolies, "the clouds are gathering, I am afraid we shall have rain." "Oh no, mem sahib, those are dry clouds," was the answer, and on they trudged, slowly it seemed to me, for the sun was soon hid, and I was anxious to press on. "Make haste," I urged ; "how slow you are!" At last a few faint and distant flashes of lightning began to play in the horizon. "See, I was right, we are going to have a storm." The sky was now like ink ; we were but half-way on our journey—picture my condition in a small open

litter, without even an umbrella, close upon the borders of a truly wild country ; one mile more, and we should be in the savage regions of Oude.

I now turned to the horseman escorting me, and found that he had a companion, which was some relief. “One of you men, ride on as fast as you can to the next ‘thauah’ (police station), and see if you can get a palkee for me, from any of the inhabitants of the village, so that I may be under shelter before the storm comes ; also collect more coolies, so that we may get quickly over the road ; and a torch-bearer, for it will be soon dark.” The man vanished in a trice, and I congratulated myself on my presence of mind, and gathered courage for the coming emergency. I felt glad of little doggie’s company (faithful, fond, loving thing that it is). Arrived at the village, fancy my dismay at finding there was no palkee to be had, and the “sowar” (horseman) whom I had despatched was a goose, and had not even collected the extra coolies, according to my order. What was to be done next ? A crowd of half naked villagers had assembled, not one of whom had probably ever seen an English lady before—certainly not in that place, and it is not pleasant to feel yourself the object of such boorish curiosity. “Now,” I said, turning to the other horseman ; “that sowar has proved himself to be a man without understanding, let me see

how clever you can be. Some sort of covered conveyance I must have; be off and bring one." In a few minutes the individual returned, causing to be brought a—what shall I call it?—rude framework of cane, something like a large bird-cage, only open at both ends. Nothing better than this could the village afford. Over the framework, I threw my stout woollen shawl, and from one of the bearers I borrowed a blanket; the two formed a screen from the rain; on the litter (which was anything but clean or inviting) I folded a quilt which I had had wrapped round me in the dandy. Then casting a look round, to see if there was any hope of the storm keeping off, or whether I might with any prudence continue my journey in the open dandy, I decided to creep into my miserable cage. It was well I did so. Doggie immediately coiled himself up close to me; and I, by dint of contrivance, doubled up my long body into a five-foot bed. By this time the bearers had been collected, also a torch-holder, and off we set. My dear May, may I never be out again in such a storm! The day at the Bewar bungalow was nothing compared to that evening, and I had only a blanket between me and the hurricane. The rain soon put out the torch, and the darkness was only relieved by the glare of lightning. Even the bearers got frightened. I had some diffi-

culty in making them keep away from the trees. The excitement of the adventure kept me up, and though I heartily wished myself in camp, I did not feel fear. Strange to say, the flapping of the blanket in the wind kept the rain off, and only the hem of my dress was wet when I arrived at the tents. We were forced to seek shelter in a small mud house by the roadside, until the violence of the storm had passed over, and did not reach camp till nine o'clock. Poor Walter was quite anxious ; he had despatched first one and then another messenger, to see what had become of me, all of whom had of course missed us in the darkness. There was a bright fire burning in the tent ; they had thrown one side open, and kindled there a large pile of wood. How cheery it looked, and how glad was I of a good cup of hot tea, and a mutton chop ! Our provisions are brought out to us every day on a pony ; the letters, by the horseman, who is charged with office papers. The arrival of this messenger is the event of the day ; and as soon as he makes his appearance, we run out of the tents and claim our letters. We shall be at home before Christmas, and have invited all solitary bachelors to dine with us on that day. In February we start again on our travels ; but really my letter has run to an alarming length, and I have been neglecting all my other duties, which, while in camp, are of various

sorts; I see all the animals fed, and reserve to myself the pleasure of giving Sir Bedivere his breakfast and dinner. He is looking so handsome just now. There he is picketed under a mango tree, pricking up his ears at the sight of the bucket in which the grain has been moistened, and which the "syce" (groom) is just bringing to me.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE interval that elapsed, between our trips into the district, was not eventful. My husband had rather harder work than usual ; still, as an assistant, he had not very weighty or responsible business on his shoulders. He was a very sunbeam in the house ; so cheerful and happy. I used to like to hear him singing and whistling to himself,—I can't understand how any one can quarrel with such light-hearted demonstrations. If the music is not of the first order, and the tunes are (not a little oddly) jumbled together, the sounds tell of joyousness, and that alone should cause pleasure to the listener. Did any one ever hum a fragment, or even a bar of a song *unconsciously* with a heavy heart ?

Oh, what a priceless gem a happy disposition is, in a country like India ; and what torments some poor creatures endure, from their own, or other's gloominess ! It is, undoubtedly, a feature of some complaints most common in such a climate ; but may not that physical evil be in a measure over-

come by mental discipline, a reluctance to impose one's own miseries on others? There were but few croakers at our station. I used to laugh unmercifully at those few. One poor fellow said to me, "Ah, Mrs. Grey, it's all very well for you to say we should not grumble; but you don't know what a solitary, wretched life is, and to think how many years of it we have before us." I was obliged to confess the truth of this: *I* saw everything with rose-coloured spectacles, and, of course, all looked fair; and then my heart ached for those who had not any happy home, and who must so often yearn for the sound of a loved voice, and the touch of a dear hand, especially in hours of sickness, when no companionship of friends can make up for the presence of a home face by the bed-side. Natives are kind, watchful nurses; but how is it possible to wish for no greater earthly solace, than the sight of a melancholy, impassive, black countenance, knowing (as all must, who have any acquaintance with natives) that unremittingly as they will tend you to-day, if you pass away from this life to-morrow, they will not grieve or care. Sometimes they will make cries and violent exclamations of grief; but these mean nothing, and are very offensive to English feelings. Once I fancied a native showed genuine sympathy with me. On returning to my father's house, after he was taken,

I was asked by one of the attendants, if an old servant of papa's might come and make me his salaam? I cannot say, I felt inclined to grant the request; for I feared an outburst of lamentations, which I could not have borne. However, it seemed unkind to say no; so I acquiesced. The poor old man came in bowing low and often, and when he raised his head to speak, I saw his eyes were full of tears; this was all the outward show of feeling. He spoke on ordinary subjects, and did not stay long; but I could not help feeling, those half-shed tears sprang from the heart. My dear father was so kind and good to all his servants; there was scarcely one in his house who had not known me, and carried me in their arms when I was a baby. Yet, spite of all his thoughtfulness for them, how ready they always were to defraud him as much as lay in their power; how they fattened and enriched themselves with the spoils of their various offices, I know now full well. When I look back at the short time I attempted housekeeping under his roof, what an absurd farce it seems. I (in the innocence of my heart), so happy in being surrounded by old and tried servants, whose only wish *must* be how best to serve such a master. It was cruel to have to learn by bitter experience what a romance this was.

I am tempted here to say a few words upon a sub-

ject which I have heard vehemently discussed in England. My feeble testimony will carry little weight, perhaps none; but I must say, I think the sweeping accusation brought against Englishmen in India, that they ill-treat, and beat their servants, is *most* unjust. I don't mean to state this is *never* done. Young men landing in India, ignorant of the language, and therefore unable to express the indignation they must feel, at the dishonesty and untruthfulness of their black attendants, are often, I believe, betrayed into using the plain language of blows. Of course, this cannot for one instant be justified. It is ungentlemanly and cowardly, to use the mildest words. (I do not take higher ground, because so many, alas, call themselves Christians, who are not actuated by the fear or love of God.) But it is not surprising that they so forget themselves: the aggravation is so great, and of such constant recurrence. When the language is acquired, and a vent in words afforded for their anger, the case is different. A native's feelings are outraged, I believe, as grossly as by a cuff on the head, when he is called the child of an owl, or a pig. I have begun with the exception. I speak what I honestly think, when I say, that the rule is—*kind treatment*; and very generally the most indulgent masters and mistresses have the worst servants. My

theory is—be very strict, act as if they were children that required constant looking after, and make up your mind to tolerate a certain amount of imposition, so long as they keep within reasonable bounds. As your position and pay improves, you must expect to have more to pay in proportion; and it is useless to resist this established custom. The colonel's wife must submit to the tax the ensign's wife is free from. She must not expect to live at the same rate of comfort as she used to do on the sum set apart for housekeeping expenses, when first she married her good husband; unless, indeed, she was then as thrifless as young, and took no heed of money matters. The same attention and care natives bestow upon the sick, is shown to the children entrusted to their charge. They certainly are wonderfully patient and gentle. Hour after hour they will sit and play with, or talk to the little tyrants, who are too often allowed to speak to them as if they were slaves, or dogs. A woman will frequently desert her own child, for the sake of the stranger infant she has fostered; and the poor black babies are often sacrificed, by the neglect of those to whom the dhaie (wet-nurse) has consigned them, while nourishing the English infant. Children themselves in mind, the silly games and stories they amuse their charges with, amuse them also. Coupled

with their extraordinary heartlessness, is a great care for and generosity to all their belongings. A man or woman will tell you, in discussing the question of their wages, how many relations he or she has to support; and they certainly do transmit large sums of money to their homes. Whether this should be attributed to unselfishness and generosity, it is difficult to say. I believe it is a link of that wonderfully strong chain of dustoor (custom), which binds the whole race. If they support their needy relations while they are able to do so, they expect to be supported in their turn, when their rainy day comes. We had a good servant who met with an accident, and died in consequence, while away from his home. I kept his ring and the charm he wore round his neck, to give to his widow. When I sent for her, she came in a small covered litter, with three children; two of whom were certainly no expense to her in the way of clothes; their costume consisting of a string tied round the waist (for what purpose it would be difficult to say). The whole family bundled out of the litter, and proceeded in silence to my room: then, and not till then, the widow lifted up her voice, and wept, and shrieked, falling at my feet, and kissing them; and what was all this cry about? her husband's goodness? his love for her? her love for him? Oh, nothing so

paltry. "How shall I get food now?" "Where are the rupees to come from?" "Who will fill my children's stomachs?" and other such heart-rending lamentations, were the burden of her song. The ring and charm, of what value were they to her? I cut short this scene as soon as I could make myself heard; and assuring the woman she should have a small allowance from the sahib, to keep her from starvation, had her conducted back to the litter whence she came,—not a little disgusted.

CHAPTER XXVI.

I SHALL now give some account of our second month under canvass. Anticipating as we did, some skirmishes with tigers, and various excitements of a novel sort during the course of our wandering, I determined to keep a journal; I am now repaid for the trouble it cost me, by having the untidy, hastily written manuscript to refer to, when I wish to conjure up from the past the events of that happy time. Under great difficulties was the journal written; sometimes under a tree, in the early morning when our tents were not up, and my hands benumbed with cold. It was better to attempt to write, than to give oneself up to all the miseries of arriving at the encamping ground, tired, hungry, cold, and finding all in confusion; no prospect of bath, or breakfast, for an hour at least, judging from the sleepy, pinched appearance of the servants, still bundled up in their thick brown blankets. The only thing to cheer one, was to order the lighting of a heap of twigs; but alas! they were generally too wet with dew to kindle into anything

like a blaze. All this was not a little trying to the temper, but we were not often victims to such inconvenience. At, or soon after daybreak, we emerged from the night-tent, arrayed in all our warmest wraps, and mounted the dog-cart, which my husband would generally drive tandem. How invigorating the clear frosty air was. The horses started with right good-will, glad to have an opportunity of warming themselves. Half way we would find our riding horses awaiting us, and then enjoy a good sharp canter to the next encamping ground. If all had gone on smoothly, the tents would be up, our bathing water ready, and the table servants busy in preparing breakfast. Wonderful managers they are ; out there in the open air, without stove, or other convenience for cooking, they will prepare as tasty a dish on the small mud fireplace which they have just constructed, as they would in the kitchen at home. Or (if it rains hard, and there is no hope of keeping the fire lighted), under the shelter of a tiny cooking tent (in the centre only of which can they stand upright), they will defy the fury of the elements, and send up your dinner hot as you could wish. From the village near the encamping ground, they will procure eggs, and *fowls*, perhaps ; but all other necessaries, bread, meat, vegetables, bones for soup, etc., must be brought out daily from the station. Your flocks and herds travel with

you. We received an invitation from the collector, Mr. Grant, to join him at the place where a large annual fair was held, on the banks of a small river in our district. "You must take to an elephant," he wrote, "for the dews are so heavy, that riding on the grass is dangerous, the horses cannot keep their footing, and there are no roads; deep cart ruts will point out the way to the hackery drivers; but you must make up your mind to rough it, in every sense of the word. We may have the good luck to see a tiger, though it is early in the year, and the grass is very high. I have a good line of elephants, and can put two at your service; so if you think it worth your while, come, and welcome."

"Of course it's worth while, Walter; don't say no, there's a dear fellow. I am sure I shan't knock up; and only think if we see a tiger!"

"Don't build up your hopes too high: I am afraid there is small chance of that: you're a plucky old woman, and I should like of all things to have you by my side in the howdah; but I can't feel quite so certain as you do, that you are up to all that fatigue. You don't know what a whole day on the back of an elephant is; and then you would have no shade but an umbrella."

I pleaded very hard, and at last it was settled we should go together. The first day we travelled

in a howdah ; but this we speedily exchanged for a pad, which (for the enlightenment of English readers) I must explain to be a stout, square mattress, covered with red cotton cloth, called "Kuruah." The mattress is fastened on to the elephant by thick ropes ; you mount by a ladder, and take your seat on the well-stuffed pad. At first you feel unsafe at such a height from the ground, with nothing to hold on by but the ropes which fasten on the mattress ; your feet hang over the side, or tail of the animal—for the pad accommodates four on an emergency. The seat nearest the driver is the most comfortable. When the elephant rises from its kneeling position, you have to keep your wits about you, or in an unguarded moment you will lose your balance. The rough motion of the creature is less felt on a pad than in a howdah, which, being raised, sways with each step of its bearer ; but underneath the mattress, the working of the huge bones and muscles is plainly felt. We travel thus at about the rate of four, or (if the elephant be a good goer) five miles an hour.

On the third day we arrived at the scene of the fair, and had sighted the hills. The scenery was wild, and very beautiful ; the clear blue river, winding along the richly-wooded plain, and our old friends, the Himalayas, in the distance, with here and there a peep of the snowy range beyond. We

had to cross the river before reaching our encamping ground, which was out of the bustle and smoke of the fair.

“Look,” said Walter; “so much for our hopes of finding the tent up, and the bed ready for you to rest on. There are our carts in the water now. They will be a long time in reaching the other side, judging from the pace at which they are moving.”

The moment the cartmen caught sight of us, they began belabouring the poor wretched oxen, shouting, pushing, vociferating, with might and main, but it was no easy work, pulling the unwieldy carts through the mud and water; and the tail-twisting and blows, which excited my indignation against the drivers and my pity for the beasts, were but of small avail. Every ford down the river was live with men and women, ponies, camels, oxen; and the various groups added greatly to the liveliness and picturesque nature of the scene. Our elephant behaved like a wise, reasoning creature. These rivers are full of quick-sands, as he knew by experience, and my friend was not going to be hurried into taking a rash step; very gravely and majestically he walked in, and felt the bottom with his trunk before he ventured on a fresh footprint. A young elephant in our train, who was of a thoughtless disposition, nearly got into great trouble by incautiously wandering from the

ford. Seeing a large log of wood in the river, he had mistaken it for an alligator, and set off trumpeting, and plunging about with fear; and of course plunged into unsafe ground, and was up to his shoulders in quicksand immediately. Fortunately, being of lighter weight than his older companions, he extricated himself without much difficulty. The poor animals dread these swamps exceedingly, but are very ingenious in helping themselves out, if they do chance to sink in.

In the evening we went out to see the fair, but, what with clouds of smoke and dust, we were nearly blinded; and, beyond a vast and motley crowd of noisy Asiatics, there was little to see. The next day we were to be after the tiger. Our intelligence of one being in the neighbourhood was pretty sure, but still Mr. Grant was not sanguine. I was the only lady of the party. We had a capital line of elephants to beat the jungle. Each howdah was stocked with water, biscuit, and sandwiches, for we should be out till sunset. We took books also, but I hoped we might not require any such amusement. We soon reached the grass jungle, which I had so often heard about, and long wished to see. Almost as far as eye could reach, was an unbroken yellow line. The elephants walked straight at this wall of grass, and immediately, all but the sky above was shut out

from sight by this rank, coarse vegetation ; the tufts of silvery blossom towered some feet about the howdah, so that wading through it, our neighbour elephant was frequently hidden from us. Here and there, the umbrellas, held up for protection from the sun's rays, would appear above the grass. It was strange work. On stalked the elephants, swaying their trunks to and fro, and occasionally tearing up a large tuft by the roots, and eating off the blossom. Then there would be a rush, a movement in the grass ahead, and all eyes strained in that direction,—hoping, wishing ; it was only a herd of buffaloes—stupid creatures—scared from their lazy snooze by the tramping of the elephants. We exchange exclamations of disappointment, and on we go, through the monotonous forest of dried grass, of which we are getting weary.

Two or three hours of this, and then a rumour of tiger's foot-prints. "Where? where?" All are on the *qui vive* immediately. We track them for some distance, and then we come upon a torn and half-eaten carcase. Hope is changed into expectancy. The brute must have been there not long ago, for the prints are fresh, and he has not finished his meal, so he will be back again. The excitement is immense. Who will see him first?

"Oh, Walter, suppose he charges at the other end

of the line ; why, we shall never see him at all. If this odious grass were all burnt down—”

“The tiger would not have taken refuge here—keep calm ; we’ll hope he will be kind enough to come this way.”

Just then our elephants made sundry little impatient taps with their trunks against the ground, and commence a trumpeting.

“Look out, Grey,” says Mr. Grant from the adjoining howdah ; “do you see that snake-like movement in the grass ? that is the tiger escaping, we have fairly caught him.” We push our elephants on rapidly, and in five minutes come upon a piece of open—hurrah ! there goes the tiger, springing, bounding to reach another little patch of grass ahead ; the long line behind, prevents his turning back. Crack, crack, bang, from every howdah ; a shower of bullets follow the fugitive, and now he is sorely wounded, but on he goes, and reaches cover. Now for a grand fight. We surround the patch in which he is hiding, and, driven to desperation, the animal rushes out with a tremendous roar, and fastens on one of the pad elephants, who shakes, and sways from side to side, till he gets rid of his inconvenient burden. Bang, bang, again. He has been mortally wounded, and cannot fight any more.

“Wait a minute,” says our experienced friend,

Mr. Grant ; "don't be in a hurry for the skin ; if I am not mistaken, there is life in the old dog yet."

Hardly were the words uttered, when the apparently lifeless tiger got up with another fierce roar, and fastened on the head of the nearest elephant.

"Oh, Walter ! the driver, he will surely be killed ; fire, I beseech you ! see how close the hideous creature is to the poor man ! Oh, I can't bear to look at that !" But before Walter could answer, the tiger's last moment had come ; falling heavily to the ground, he never stirred again. *That* had been the death struggle. A noble, terrible brute it was : looking so powerful even in death. It required ten or twelve men to lift the carcase on to the elephant with ropes.

"Well, my ambition is satisfied, dear Walter ; it was a wonderful sight."

"You were not frightened ?"

"Oh, not in the least ; except, when I thought the māhout was in danger. What a tremendous sound that roar was, with which he charged ! I should not like to hear it in a calmer moment. It made my heart beat half an hour ago ; but I was so excited that I felt no fear." We became aware that time had passed so quickly in the pursuit of our enemy, that noon had long passed, and we should be benighted if we did not hasten home. So the order to return was given, and back we went through the long weary waste.

The weighing and measuring of the tiger was

made, when we reached camp. He lay stiff and stark in the moonlight; and, before morning, nothing but the skin, claws, and whiskers remained of the formidable animal, who had done so much mischief in his day.

When I wrote an account of our sport to Alice Champion, she was all on the *qui vive*, to see what I had seen; and subsequently she had good opportunity. For my part, I was quite satisfied with one tiger hunt, and never wish to see another. I can fancy a long spell of howdah life would make one very wild, and wear off some of the fine edges of womanly gentleness,—for the time at least. And though it is charming to see a lady free from all cowardice, and nervous fears, her feminine outline of mind cannot be guarded too strictly. There are very few, who can do anything masculine in a graceful way, and be *quite* the woman, while they ride hard, or fire guns and pistols, or drive four in hand. I felt I must be very careful to avoid these “strong-minded” eccentricities, as they are called; a complete misnomer, *mind* has nothing to do with physical courage. A brave soul is often found to inhabit a feeble timorous body. The woman who will scream at the sight of a mouse, may be a heroine at heart, and dare to do or say the thing that is right, when it will cost her a great and painful sacrifice. That is the orthodox courage.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RETURNED to our quiet station life, with a long vista of hot weather and rainy months before me, I began to cast about in my mind what work I should find to do. My friendship for Mrs. Raymond had borne good fruit thus far, that I felt I could not be content to lead the useless life I had hitherto led. Housekeeping, reading, writing, work, music, were all well enough ; but, surely there was something harder, sterner, for me to do. There were the writers' children, a mere handful it was true ; but still, small as was the number, there was no school they could attend ; no one seemed to care for their souls. It soon became clear to my mind, that I was responsible in some measure for these poor children, growing up in ignorance, and almost heathen darkness. For, though they went to church, their unawakened minds could little comprehend the meaning of what they heard there. Mrs. De Silva's school in the city, had taught me that much could be done even on neglected soil. So I thought I would try. The

parents were only too glad to let the children come to me, and it was decided they should attend for two or three hours daily ; from the time our " little breakfast " party broke up, till half-past nine. I felt like a person taking up a tangled skein of silk, unable to find either end. The children could write fairly enough ; this was considered to be the most important branch of their education ; as a neat and legible hand would ensure some employment as section-writers in the Government offices. They could read, too ; but, oh, the vacancy of mind ! the deep, deep sleep of intellect ! Some chapters from the Bible, and hymns, they could repeat like parrots, never pausing for sense, or stop. Check the steady flow of nasal recitation for one moment, and they were lost. As to ever attempting to understand what they learnt, such new-fashioned notions had never entered their heads. How would they ever be shaken out of such routine ? What worse than folly, to allow children to learn in such a way ! And then, it was so hard to fight against all the cunning and duplicity, which they had imbibed from their birth. In no respect were they English ; and yet, those Anglo-Indians despise and hate the natives as none others do ; and are, in turn, looked down upon by those over whom they tyrannise, if they have a chance. It remains for a future generation to give this neglected race all

the benefits of good education ; and, above all, *religious* instruction, that they may be Christians in more than name.

In the large stations, schools have been for some time established, and every advantage afforded to the writers' children ; but much has still to be done. As to the drummers in the Native Infantry regiments, I believe their Christianity consists in having no caste, and feeling at liberty to eat beef and pork. Sunday after Sunday, they will attend Divine service, with their wives and children (who are dressed in the most fantastic manner, and of course the gayest possible colours), and if you speak to them, you will find, that not one of the women can understand English ; a few words, caught up by chance, are interwoven strangely with their Hindostanee, with little regard to sense ; but they are proud of these few words, and of their English names, given to them at their baptism. It is all very sad, and one can't help feeling, that rites thus performed, are a terrible mockery. I used to rejoice in the sight of so many regular attendants at church, and at their quiet grave behaviour, until I found out what a mere form it was to most of them. The men are often intelligent, and some of them tolerably educated ; but they will not be troubled to teach their wives and daughters. I have said that the dress of these women is grotesque in the

extreme. We used to wonder where they got the money they spent in an endless variety of coarse, showy-coloured muslin dresses. It was really difficult sometimes to repress a smile, at the elaborate toilettes in which they used to appear. Some had the good taste to wear a veil, or handkerchief of plain or flowered muslin, neatly fastened on the head; but when a bonnet was indulged in, it was a perfect parterre of gorgeous flowers—a glaring combination of silk or satin, with cotton lace, and perhaps the ticket of price fastened to the crown or other conspicuous part. Beneath the dress would appear stockingless feet, clad in slip-shod shoes; and there was always a great paucity of petticoats, of course. I saw a drummer's bride adorned in a jupe, with deep, vandyked border of open work, which she was so anxious to exhibit, as a master-piece (if I may so call it) of English finish, that even the dress was considered a secondary thing, and hoisted up, to display the under garment. This is indeed a long tirade on dress and fashion; but these peculiarities are worth recording, being strongly characteristic of that class of people.

One of the writer's wives at our station was a very intelligent woman; wrote and spoke both English and Oordoo fluently, had a clear head for account-keeping, and was altogether a great assistance to her

husband, whose intellects were as feeble as need be ; and who was a thorn in the magistrate's side, though the poor man was willing and anxious to do his duty, and was a good soul. Every word of his writing had to be carefully looked over, else the grossest and most absurd blunders were committed in the papers sent to the Judge or Commissioner, purporting to be from the Collector or his assistants. Whenever any word in the English decisions was written indistinctly, M. Le Cruz would insert one of his own in the copy, however irrelevant it might be to the meaning of the sentence. The wife had certainly monopolized the husband's share of wits. Their children being my scholars, I used to call and see the mother occasionally, and report their progress, or incite her to push them on in their studies, as the case might be. Gradually it dawned upon me, that this woman might be a fitting instrument to carry out a project I had for some time brooded over.

If a clever and efficient school-mistress could be found, might we not hope to establish a school for native girls ? She must be one who understood the native character, its intricacies and windings. I am sure, none but those who have been born and bred in India, have any knowledge of what the thoughts and feelings of the people are. Secondly, it would be necessary, that the mistress should speak and write

both English and Oordoo fluently; be quite able to define, explain, argue, reach the understanding by idioms and familiar illustrations; be in no wise cramped by a deficiency of words. Thirdly, we must have sufficient confidence in her integrity and worth, to expect her to exercise a good moral influence on her scholars. This was the most important point, but alas, the most impossible to feel satisfied about. Mrs. Le Cruz answered our first two demands, but she was so little known to us, and we could have so little opportunity of knowing her better, that we must only hope for the best as to the third.

So, one evening, accompanied by a dear, benevolent old lady (the mother of one of the officers in our regiment), we walked over to Mrs. Le Cruz's house, and found her "at home." She expressed all readiness to undertake the work for thirty shillings a month, until the number of scholars exceeded fifteen, when we promised to give an extra two shillings for every additional scholar. She was to use all her influence to collect pupils, and promise the reward of a farthing daily to all who attended regularly. Small as the sum may sound to English ears, such a bribe would be a great inducement to a native. Their wants are few. It is wonderful how little they can live on. The wages of punkah-pullers

(the worst paid servants in our establishment) vary from six to eight shillings a month. Weighed by this scale, the daily farthing became a sum of importance. Mrs. Le Cruz was, moreover, to represent, as eloquently as she could, the extreme advantages of education. We left her with hopeful hearts; Mrs. Bailey, my friend, being especially sanguine. She had lately started a class for the drummers' wives and children; and every morning for three hours (spite of her years, and the great labour of the work) this energetic, zealous Christian was to be seen, surrounded by her pupils of all ages. Truly the question of education had been warmly taken up at our station. We had no ladies' committees, but a vast number of informal consultations and discussings, and I, for one, used to feel quite bewildered in the search for books and suitable primers, alphabets, tracts, &c. After the lapse of a few days, I thought I would see how many scholars Mrs. Le Cruz had secured. I had done my best to recruit from the families of our own servants—ordered, coaxed, entreated, argued. One or two promised to send their daughters, but when the time came to test their promises, each found an excuse. At last, my washerman came to me with folded hands.

“I have a petition to make, your highness.”

“ Well, what is it ? ”

“ Mem sahib, if you can tell me of another washerman, who sends his daughters to school to be taught, I will send mine. As it is, her caste will be lost for ever, if I allow her to go ; no one will marry her ; she will be shut out from the society of her kins-folk. Mem sahib, it cannot be ; I am helpless.”

“ Is it possible ? ” I said. “ I have heard that you natives are wedded to your old customs ; but is it possible that you are so blind ? Here we are anxious to make your children sensible women, able to read and write, and keep your accounts, instead of doing nothing, but cook chuppatties, smoke, sleep, and talk nonsense. We go to the expense of providing a mistress, and offer a reward for regular attendance, and you actually *refuse* to send them. Because your mothers, and grandmothers, and great-grandmothers were women void of understanding, you condemn your daughters and granddaughters to be the same ? ”

This fervent appeal made no sort of impression on the stolid individual who continued standing before me, with joined hands, and head meekly bent, but perfectly resolute. It was very provoking ; but still I hoped that Mrs. Le Cruz had been more successful, and that *I* had failed from want of tact. No ; my expectations were all disappointed. Mrs.

Le Cruz had also utterly failed ; and, strange to say, had met with the strongest opposition amongst the lowest classes, those whom we might with good excuse think had no caste to lose. When I reported our defeat to Mrs. Raymond, she wrote back to say I ought not to be discouraged. Even in long-subjugated provinces, this was the knotty point, which still seemed to defy all unravelling. Here and there, solitary instances of parents allowing their daughters to be educated, had occurred ; good omens, though few and far between, of the coming of a brighter day, she hoped. There could be no doubt, that as long as the women remained as they were—little better than caged birds—the people would remain inferior to all who had the advantage of the influence of wise and understanding women to direct the minds of the young, and to shed a refining, softening light in their homes. I could not expect to work a miracle, and the result of all the efforts hitherto made, would take years to declare itself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE rapid approach of the hot weather soon brought all camp stragglers into the station, glad of the shelter of their well-thatched roofs. Even Alice, who had been thoroughly and completely happy in her wandering life, was fain to confess, that the sun was somewhat too fervid to be pleasant. They were to spend a week with us on their return, as some of their servants had been laid up with fever, and were not in trim for work; cows, goats, and attendants, all wanted a few days' rest after such knocking about. I scarcely recognised our friends; Mr. Champion was freckled and tanned, and his wife converted into the most bewitching little gipsy. She pushed back her hair to show that she had once been fair; and then, beyond the circle of nutty, ruddy brown, appeared the clear white temples.

“ You look as if you had on a brown paper mask, Alice; but really, it was too bad of you not to take

some care of your hands ; I thought you were inclined to be vain of their small size and whiteness."

" Well, I believe I was ; but you see I have been away from all the world, and so there was no one to admire them."

" Except Mr. Champion ?"

" Oh, poor Ned ! I don't count him ; I believe he knows that I have two hands, but as to admiring the shape of them, I am sure it never entered his head to think what they were like."

I did not quite like this speech. Firstly, because there was an off-hand patronizing tone in the way she mentioned her husband ; and secondly, because I thought she was wrong in her estimate of his character. The rest of the world said, Champion was so desperately in love with his wife, that in his eyes she was perfection ; and I was quite sure no beauty had escaped his notice. Did she wish for the admiration of others, and not care how she appeared in those loving eyes ? Why did I think so much of a random speech ? It was not meant to be weighed, but it certainly fell harshly on the ear. Once or twice, I ventured to hint to Alice, that I thought it was a pity she played the tyrant, however prettily, before strangers. Her husband might understand it, but *they* did not. Then she would laugh, and call me severe, and strait-laced ; and ask if I could for a moment doubt, that her

Ned was the dearest, most charming creature in the world to her. Had they not been engaged for five long years? What better proof could be of constancy and love?

What could I say? Nothing; but in my heart I still wished she would talk and laugh a little more with him, and a little less with everybody else. Ever ready for any mad prank, she would quite forget she was no longer a girl of sixteen, and the necessity of keeping up the dignity of a married lady. Her husband, who was grave and quiet, could not keep pace with this little will-o'-the-wisp; and I fancied sometimes, that a shade of disappointment would cross his face, when she insisted in her coaxing way upon doing something wild. Still he could not refuse her. Of course ill-natured tongues were ready to take up a cry against her; and all these foolish thoughtless acts were exaggerated into something serious. But it was not till these ugly hints were put before me in plain language, by a gossiping lady, that I discovered how grave the scandal was.

“ You seem to be a great friend of Mrs. Champion’s, Mrs. Grey. Have you known her long?”

“ No, not long; but her husband and mine were at college together, and very intimate, and therefore, I never felt her to be a stranger. She is very pretty, is she not?”

“Yes, *very*; and so taking altogether; it is impossible not to be fascinated with her. She is so much admired by every one; and is so unreserved, and apparently fond of attention, that I wonder her husband is not jealous of her.” The ill-natured lady was feeling her way, preparing the small dose of poison, and only waiting to see how much she might safely administer.

“Jealous!—oh no, Mrs. Ainslie; he knows her love for him too well. They were engaged for five long years: so it has stood a good test,” I said, warmly. “Time will cure all the little giddiness and love of fun, which make her a little outstep the bounds of dignity at times; and she is so thoroughly transparent and candid, that it is impossible to accuse her of anything not on the surface.”

“Well, I hope you are right, Mrs. Grey; but you know the world *will* talk, and her husband would be much pained, if he could hear the things that are said. Why, one of the officers boasts that he has one or two notes from Mrs. Champion every day, and I know he is constantly at the house while her husband is at Kutcherry.”

“Stay, Mrs. Ainslie,” I said, in great anger, “this is too unjust: I will hear no more. It is all untrue, I am sure; but, whether or no, I shall consider it my duty to go straight to Mrs. Champion, and tell

her what I have heard ; and warn her, what a hard cruel world this is, in which she is so unconsciously figuring as a faithless wife."

" Pray, I beseech you, do not give *me* as your authority ; and don't put the matter so strongly, or you will make sad mischief."

" I will not mention your name, and I will not exaggerate what you have said, Mrs. Ainslie ; but I should be dealing falsely with my friend, if I hid this from her. She may never forgive me, may mistake my motive ; but painful as *that* would be, I will not shrink from it. Tell me, which do you think the kindest? to repeat such stories to a third person unconcerned, or to go to the one accused, and give her an opportunity of defending herself?"

" Well, I am glad I don't think it *my* duty," answered Mrs. Ainslie. " I am sorry now I ever mentioned this stupid speech of Mr. Oswald's ; it's sure to come round to him, and I dare say he only said it in joke."

" And it is that boy, Mr. Oswald, with whom she is accused of flirting? That *child* I might almost say. It would be ridiculous, if it were not so very unkind. Poor Alice."

" Well, pray forget all about it, and let the matter rest."

" No, indeed, I shall not. If scandal will be

forged on such a foundation as *that*, it is well to be put on one's guard."

I felt relieved when the lady was gone. Glad to have time to think of all she had said, and all I should have to say to Alice, when I had first asked my husband's advice. He quite agreed with me as to the right course to take. We talked the matter over while we took our evening drive; and it was determined we should spend the evening with the Champions, that I might have an opportunity of speaking to Alice.

"We are come to invite ourselves to dinner," I said, when we reached their house. "If you are not prepared for two additional appetites, send over to our house, and we will contribute all our store."

"That is capital," said Alice; "we have good soup, and plenty of meat, and you shall supply the pudding. How nice of you to give us such a pleasant surprise."

"Well, the fact is, I have something to say to you, and I don't want to put it off or be hurried."

"Now really it is wrong of you to excite my curiosity like this—and you look so grave; but I know it is hopeless to attempt to make you speak till the time comes; so let us hasten dinner."

The prospect of our interview did not make me very comfortable; and once or twice I was rallied on

my fit of abstraction. It was no use planning what I should say; every well-arranged sentence went out of my head as soon as it was coined. When we found ourselves alone, I began in desperation; but my heart beat so quickly, that my voice was not like itself.

“Alice, dear, I don’t know how to begin; and I know I am going to blunder and be very blunt; although nothing but love for you, and my great regard for your husband, makes me speak. You see, I think friendship is worth nothing without honesty; and I have heard remarks to-day which I feel you ought to know, though I wish you not to question who made them, because I don’t want to make mischief.”

“Oh, Agnes, what are you going to say? I declare you quite frighten me!”

“Listen patiently. I am sure it is in the thoughtlessness and innocence of your heart that you have been acting; but those who do not know and love you, will make no allowances, and are only too ready to build up ugly, ill-natured fabrications, on the ground of your imprudence. The long and short of the matter is, that grave accusations have been made against you, of carrying on a flirtation with Mr. Oswald.”

I was interrupted by a peal of merry laughter from my listener.

"Nay," I said, "if you are going to take it as a jest, I shall say no more."

"But really, it is so ridiculous; so perfectly absurd. I can't think how you gave it a second thought."

"Because, Alice, as long as we are in the world, we cannot set society's opinion at defiance; and, though I expressed the same surprise and scorn that you are now expressing, when the tale was told to me, I felt not the less that it was of consequence, because a woman cannot be too jealous of the slightest breath upon her fair name; not only because it is a reflection upon her conduct, but because, as the dearest and nearest object to her husband's heart, the pride and honour of his life, for *his* sake she is bound by all that is holy, to let no word be spoken against her."

"But such an empty word as this. It does seem hard to have to be tormented by it. 'Honi soit qui mal y pense.'"

"True; but you know we are to avoid all appearance of evil, at the same time that we are not to seek the world's good opinion in any way which would involve a sacrifice of principle. Our light is to shine before men. The trumpet is not to give an uncertain sound. I am told Mr. Oswald writes constant notes to you, and is often here while your husband is at office."

“ I know he is ; we read German together four times a-week, for two hours ; and I look forward to, and enjoy those readings immensely ; and, as to the notes, you know what chits are—and how one spends half the day in sending messages in that way. Stupid messages, that one can’t give these natives to deliver by word of mouth, because they make such blunders. Asking the loan of a book, or a piece of music, or any such trifle.”

“ First, then, about the reading German—but it is no business of mine ; and now having stated my errand, I ought to leave the rest to you.”

“ Oh no, I beseech you—help me with a little advice ; how am I to get out of this ?”

“ Well, I cannot see the necessity for your devoting so much time to reading with him. If he has any sense he can study by himself ; and I honestly confess, I think it is not quite the thing to be so much with any one, in the absence of your husband ; though I suppose he knows of it.”

“ Yes—and no ; I have never thought of mentioning it particularly ; was that wrong ?”

“ Decidedly,—surely you tell him everything ?”

“ Everything of consequence ; but not such trifles as that.”

“ Oh, Alice ! you are sure to get into trouble, and forfeit his confidence, if you do not. I am not

surprised, now, that all this has happened. Depend upon it, he would not like Mr. Oswald's being here so constantly."

" Well, I don't see how to put a stop to it, without seeming to admit I was grossly in the wrong."

" In your little off-hand, positive way, you might easily tell Mr. Oswald, you were not going to waste so much time on German any more; and that he must study by himself. I have heard you make many such a speech without giving offence. Find out some other occupation, and tell him that will monopolize the hours for German."

" And he will think me so ill-natured, and wanting in perseverance."

" I thought you were not going to mind what people thought, eh? Now, in this instance, I really do not see that you need."

Alice looked confused for a minute; so to give her time, I said,

" You know if you are doing what is right, you must not mind; besides, you must be prepared for a little trouble and annoyance. You see, Alice, a young, lively creature like you, who has some pretensions to beauty, and, like other women, a love of admiration, has to be more careful to avoid giving the faintest occasion for scandal than an older, graver, plainer person would: I suppose, because ladies are

wicked and jealous enough to be glad to detract, when any one is much admired and sought after. It is a horrible idea, but, I am afraid, too true."

"And so we are to pay this penalty for being pretty! Why, it is not in me to be staid, and sober, and demure; and I cannot play a part."

We were interrupted at this point of the conversation by the entrance of the gentlemen.

Relieved of the burden on my mind, I had now no difficulty in entering into the chit-chat of the evening. When we reached home, my husband asked me what impression I had made, and how Mrs. Champion had taken my remonstrance.

"She was not at all angry, or inclined to be offended, as I feared she might be; but I wish she were a little more alarmed, and would not take the whole thing as a joke. You see she is such a merry, thoughtless creature. Perhaps she feels more than she confesses; we shall soon see."

Alas! I was not long in discovering that Alice had not acted up to her half-formed resolutions. By small—almost imperceptible steps—the distance between herself and her husband was widening; they had not many tastes in common. She was fond of riding, and dancing, and society; and he was no rider, no dancer, and fond of a quiet, domestic life. So it came to pass that they were often seen apart.

Mr. Champion would walk to the jail, or the scene of some new road-making, or into the city on some official errand, and Mrs. Champion would set off for a solitary ride, and of course soon be joined by one or more friends. It was impossible not to show displeasure or surprise, when we met her laughing and chatting with other gentlemen, while her husband was taking a solitary ramble in another direction. His manner was becoming grave almost to sadness, while Alice, on the contrary, was merrier and wilder than ever. She shunned all renewal of our conversation. I fancied she dreaded my referring to the subject, or questioning her about the German studies with Mr. Oswald ; for she always contrived to have a great many commonplace matters of household or other business to transact when she came to see me, and was evidently not quite at ease. Of course I could not think it my duty to force the subject upon her. But how often I was pained and grieved by the comments of others, and the triumphant, malicious glances of Mrs. Ainslie, when at the band-stand Alice would be walking up and down with one of the officers, and her husband not there. "He did not care for music, and thought the band a bore," she said ; "and, of course, she was not going to stay away."

"Where will all this end, Walter?" I asked.
"I cannot persuade myself that the long attachment

is to terminate in such misery. But a few months ago they were so happy. Mr. Champion is so forbearing and good that I cannot forgive Alice ; but I would give anything to see them as they were."

" So would I ; for I have a great regard for Ned, as Mrs. Champion calls him ; but we mustn't be hard upon her. It may not be so bad as we think, and you ought not to be so cold and distant, or she will cease to care for you."

I fear that in my heart had sprung up hard thoughts. Perhaps I was hurt at the little influence my words had had, and some self-complacency was the result of my contrasting my conduct with that of Alice. O woman, woman ! I had not the temptation of beauty, or that irresistible sparkling wit which made Alice so sought after. Could I compare myself with her ? I, who had been blessed with such a father, and all my life long had been led and counselled so wisely ? while she, poor orphan child, had been left to the mercy of stern, hard guardians, who had nipped the affections of her young heart, and forced her to feed upon her own thoughts, and battle as she best might, without religion to aid her, against the faults and frailties of her nature. I thought over all this, but still found no sufficient excuse for the heedless little wife—who, it seemed to me, was casting from her the priceless jewel of a loving heart,

for the tinsel and false glitter of admiration which could not be coupled with esteem.

About this time I received a letter from May Sherwood, informing me of her engagement to an officer in Colonel Raymond's regiment, who, having only returned from sick leave to England since my marriage, was unknown to me. May wrote,—

“ You must apply to Mrs. Raymond for all particulars. You will not believe all *I* say, but I know you will value *her* opinion of any one; and I am not afraid of her sending an unfavourable report. You will be inclined to envy me for being so sure of her companionship, and indeed, dear Agnes, I do esteem it a great blessing to have the prospect of such friendship. Altogether, I seem to be too happy; and the only wish I could form (if I dared to wish for something I have not) would be, that you and your husband were near us.”

I confess I could not repress a sigh when I laid the letter down. A selfish sigh; for on May's account I was unfeignedly glad; but I did envy her a little bit. I had been so disappointed in Alice, and there was no other lady at the station I cared to make a great friend. “ I will not be a dog in the manger,” was my mental exclamation, “ because *I* can have neither May nor Mrs. Raymond, it is too absurd and churlish to grudge them to each other; and I am

very, very happy all day long ; " so, on the whole, I cannot get up a grievance.

It is long since I have mentioned my old friends at the Dudleigh Manse House, but they were not forgotten by me. We exchanged constant letters, and I was kept well informed of all the events and changes that occurred in that quiet home. My aunt and uncle had welcomed a granddaughter into the world, and all the finer, sweeter points in Ellen's character were being drawn out by the little one. " She is so devoted to the small thing," Charlie wrote ; " but you would be amused at the grave way she goes on with it, not like most young mothers, who talk such gibberish and make such wonderful noises to amuse their children, that I always thought such treatment must be necessary. However, Ellen's baby seems to thrive on this sensible system."

Charlie had left college, and was to go into the army. He would hear of nothing else. Mary was the same Mary she had ever been. All the old habits and occupations of her life the same : steadily, passionately performing her round of duties, and being a blessing to all, though not a sunbeam. It was wonderful how one so joyless could be supported and carried through the dull routine of life. Never melancholy or depressed, though never bright ; she must have been upheld by a hidden peace, although

she spoke not of it; and the world, who only knew the unlovely exterior of her character, said, “she wants nothing more than that quiet life; she has not much character; and trifles satisfy her, poor thing; it is well for her, else she would mope dreadfully.”

A FAREWELL CHAPTER.

NOTHING eventful marked the smooth current of the next few months. We glided on past the dreaded hot weather, April, May, June ; and found it not so very formidable, after all. My little school was succeeding very fairly ; as well, if not better, than I could have hoped. I trusted the time had not been frittered away. A few books—some solid, some light—had been read ; a certain amount of fluency in reading Hindostanee had been attained ; a great many letters had been posted ; and sundry dainty, miniature articles of dress, looking very like a doll's wardrobe, had been manufactured, with willing, ingenious fingers, and a heart full of happy hopes, and anticipations of the time when these fairy fabrications of cambric and lace would be brought into requisition. Such were the *apparent* results of those days and months. Might I not hope that some *invisible* progress had also been made ; some uncertain, feeble, but still onward, upward-tending steps. Ah, how difficult it is to trace these spiritual footprints ! to determine in what direction they have been taken ;

and yet we are never standing still. The soul *must* journey. If she is not pressing forward toward the prize, she is being drawn further from it, and losing ground.

One morning, as my husband and I were driving home to "chota haziru," we met Mr. Champion, walking in the direction of the city. It was getting very late to be out in the sun ; and we remonstrated with him on his imprudence, begging him to return at once with us ; the buggy would accommodate three on an emergency—all to no avail. He was determined to transact this particular piece of business, at this particular time ; so, very unwillingly, we left him. We found Alice, and one or two other friends, assembled in our verandah, round the breakfast-table ; and Alice, as her custom was, when I was late in arriving, had made tea for me.

We told her of our meeting with Mr. Champion, and how unwise we thought him.

"Yes," she said, "Ned is very foolish ; he can't stand the sun at all, and yet he will run these risks ; and I'll venture to say, had no better protection for his head than that old black wide-awake, with a wisp of a turban round it."

"Let me see—yes, that was what he had on, I remember ; and I know there was no umbrella in his hand."

“Really, he deserves to be ill,” said Alice, somewhat pettishly; “I have spoken till I’m tired.”

I could not help thinking to myself, she might have done more than speak. A little of her tact and coaxing—the proposal of accompanying him—the substitution of a good substantial pith hat for the useless black wide-awake, would, each or all, have been more effectual than a lecture on imprudence. But I did not speak my thoughts. In the course of the day I received a note from Alice, and in it she alluded to her husband not being very well; but he had gone to office spite of a violent headache. We called in the evening to ask after him. He was sitting in the verandah alone; and I did not like his flushed face and hot hand.

“Where is Alice?” I asked.

“Oh, I begged her not to stay in, for she could do my head no good; and I don’t like her missing the evening ride; she enjoys it so much; so to please me she went.” This was said in a languid, tired voice; and as I saw talking was not good for the poor aching head, we bade him good night.

The next day he was worse. His wife was anxious now; for the doctor looked grave. He had passed a restless feverish night, and by morning his pulse was alarmingly rapid. It is almost impossible to describe the suddenness with which these fearful fevers do

their work of prostration. Suspense is not long. Almost before you have time to modulate your voice, and make your footsteps gentle; the sufferer is either well, and at his usual post; or he has passed away, and does not need your tenderness. Two, three days passed, and then the awful crisis came. I went over to the house to be near the poor wife, and render any assistance in my power. It was heart-breaking to witness her paroxysms of self-accusation.

“Oh, Agnes! I deserve all this and more. I see now, how foolish, how wicked I have been: and he, so gentle and forbearing. When his head is light, and his mind wanders, he reveals all he has felt: appeals touchingly to me to stay with him, not to leave him for a minute; and then he will hold imaginary conversations with some one, who is accusing me of being thoughtless, bent on my own selfish amusements. Some whisper of what you told me must have reached him, and he has not had heart to mention it. Well, in earnest, eloquent language he will defend me, and get so vehement that I don’t know how to calm him. I feel as if his illness were all my fault. Could I not have prevented him from running that risk, instead of leaving him to go out alone? Oh, if God will spare him, I will be a wise, good, loving wife; I always loved him; but my head was turned I think, and I do so foolishly love to be

a favourite with every one. I don't know where it might have ended but for this." All this was spoken incoherently, little by little, broken by sobs and bitter, bitter tears; and I would not check them, for I felt nature must have vent; and she had been bearing up so bravely while with him, and listening to the harrowing words that fell from the fevered lips of the unconscious sufferer, that I feared the self-control might prove too much for her. So with great persuasion, I had induced her to relinquish her post at the bedside for an hour to my husband; and invited her to pour out the pent-up grief of her full heart. At last she said: "Agnes dear, I have knelt down very often, and tried to pray; but no words would come to my mind; I was quite stupefied, and it seemed wrong to kneel on without offering one petition. Will you help me? I think if you prayed aloud, I might be able to follow you."

"I will try, dearest; but I am so unaccustomed to pray aloud. I think if you would let me begin with one of the beautiful prayers from the Visitation of the Sick, I might gather courage."

She readily consented, and I was enabled to offer up a few earnest words. After this, Alice seemed calmer, and better able to bear the suspense of that trying hour. I was not allowed to remain long with her; but my husband stayed till late that evening,

and then to my great joy brought me word that the poor worn-out patient had sunk into a sleep, from which the doctor trusted he would wake refreshed, and that it would prove the favourable turning point of the fever.

Our prayer was answered. Every prayer offered in faith is heard—must be heard—because He who cannot lie, has said it shall be ; but not always as in the present instance, is it answered by the bestowal of the very blessing for which we asked. When, however, that is vouchsafed, why are we so unready to acknowledge that our ^lprayer was of any effect in obtaining it? “Oh, it can’t be in answer to any request of mine !” is the language of the heart. Does not this arise from ingratitude and want of faith ?

Slowly Mr. Champion’s wasted strength returned. He was not strong at any time, and his feeble constitution refused to rally for many weeks. How mysteriously are our richest blessings often disguised under the form of sorrow and trial ! This season of anxious watching was a happy time to Alice ; though it cast a shade on her merry face, there was something in the quiet of her sobered manner, which convinced me she was more truly happy than she had ever been. She was so *necessary* to her husband ; had proved so clearly to every one how devoted she really was ; and instead of her old

flippant ways, had sprung up such a child-like reverence for him, that she was now a model wife.

“ Oh ! ” she said to me, “ Agnes, I cannot tell you how far above me he is. This sickness has broken down all reserve, and perhaps ripened the religion which I now know to have been always hidden in his heart. He has spoken to me often, since he got better, and able to talk ; told me we must live very differently ; that he feels God has brought him so near to death, that he might see how small this world is, and the other, how fearfully important. I cannot tell you a hundredth part of what he said ; but though it was all put so humbly and hesitatingly before me, I know how utterly unworthy I am of such a treasure. I must have been a great drawback to him all this time ; and, oh ! if he had been taken now, my conscience would have given me endless torment. God has been very merciful in giving me another opportunity.”

A few weeks after this, there was much stir and commotion in our quiet home. Alice had not been many days freed from her part of sick nurse by Mr. Champion’s bed, and consented, with some reluctance and hesitation, to allow his returning to his duties, than she was summoned (or rather came of her own good will) to fill my vacant place at the head of household government : flitting backwards and for-

wards, with a small bundle in her arms, which she seemed to consider her own property, until such time as I should be up again, and able to claim my right to this live doll. And so I was fain to be submissive, and look on quietly at all the dressing and undressing, and hushing to sleep, and thousand other little offices, which were being so constantly, skilfully, tenderly performed for the helpless, fragile little mortal.

Oh, wonderful, mysterious, sweet, the love, the hopes, the yearnings, that the advent of that baby had awakened in my heart! all crowding upon it with such importunity, that I could but marvel how I had felt no empty spot before, which must be filled. A world-old tale this mother's love; but age after age rolls on, millions taste of it in turn, and yet, much as we hear, and often as we read of this joy, which drives away all remembrance of anguish, never can we realize it, till the cup is held to our own lips.

I have brought my history to a happy point. It has been a simple record of a life such as many lead. Perhaps some have been impatient at the want of startling incident, or intricate plot. Agnes Malcolm has passed from girlhood into womanhood; the duties of wife and mother have succeeded those of her earlier years, and we bid farewell to her, still journeying on her pilgrimage of life, beset with

many faults and difficulties, often erring, often perplexed. Surrounded by blessings such as few enjoy, so it seems to her, as she and her husband bring their newly baptized darling to their home ; a little soldier of the cross, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. ·Oh, marvellous dignity, to fall on one so unconscious !

Our hearts are too full for words, as we sit in the quiet twilight, with the last blush of sunset fading from the sky, looking at the still, small face of our baby-boy, half shrouded by the folds of the lace veil thrown round him, and which his mother wore as a bride just a year ago.

That picture is faint and dim, seen through the mist of the past, and perhaps memory has dealt tenderly with it, and defaced with gentle hand all the little roughnesses of tone, the thorns and briers in the foreground. Looking back upon it in the distance, it seems so soft and peaceful, that for a few minutes we are lost to the "living present." Let us turn that sigh into a thanksgiving. Because sorrow, and separation, and suffering, have crossed our path since then, shall we cease to bless God for the bright spots in our life's history?—glimpses and foretastes of our eternal home.

THE END.

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